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POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

From the German of

REV. A. HUBERT BAMBERG

Edited by

REV. HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

WITHDRAWN

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POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

SERMON I

On Actual Grace

"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish" (*Philipp.* ii. 13).

HAVING considered the first two important parts of the catechism, which deal with the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed and with the commandments, we come now to the third part, which gives us an explanation of grace and the means of grace.

We need the help of God's grace, not only that we may believe what He has revealed, but also to enable us to keep His commandments in such a way as to attain salvation.

The catechism asks: "What do you mean by grace?" And it answers: "By grace I mean a supernatural gift of God bestowed upon us through the merits of Jesus Christ for our salvation." Briefly, grace is a gift, a present from God to man; He gives it to each one of us to show us the way to salvation, to help us to walk in it, and so lead us to heaven. It is Jesus Christ who has earned these graces for us as the fruits of His passion and death. Grace is in its nature interior and supernatural. It is *interior*. The word "gift" generally conveys to us the idea of something visible and material, but grace is en-

tirely interior and spiritual, and is communicated by God to the soul. It is *supernatural.* This means that it does not form part of our human nature, and is not inherent in any of man's natural powers; it can not be deserved or obtained by any human effort, for it is a precious thing, a priceless gift from the hand of God, which is won by the blood of Jesus Christ and which leads us to life everlasting.

There are several kinds of grace. The most important are actual grace and sanctifying grace. How are these two kinds of grace to be distinguished? Tell me, first, how we should distinguish two trees, similar in size and shape, one from another? We should look out for differences in their respective fruits and blossom, in the shape of their leaves, in their wood, bark, and even their roots. We should insist not perhaps upon their most important point of dissimilarity, but upon that which was most striking. Let us now in this case inquire which is the most apparent and obvious point of difference between actual grace and sanctifying grace? It lies in their *duration.* Actual grace passes away; it may remain with us for a longer or a shorter time, but it will leave us just as flashes of lightning appear only to disappear again. But sanctifying or habitual grace is permanent in its nature; it dwells in the soul always, unless banished by mortal sin. It is like the sun, which will shine in the firmament and give forth light until extinguished by the hand of God.

Now that we have prepared the way by these remarks, let us get to work and examine more

closely that grace which we call actual grace. Here are four questions to which, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we must find the answers:

I. In what does actual grace consist?
II. How far is it necessary to us?
III. To whom is it given?
IV. What are its effects?

I

The catechism asks: "What is actual grace?" The answer is: "Actual grace is that help of God which enlightens our mind and moves our will to shun evil and to do good." In other words, it is the influence of God on the powers of our soul. Inanimate things act in different ways upon one another; for instance, the action of the sun on all earthly and even heavenly bodies is considerable; human bodies, too, can be affected by air, water, their place of habitation, their clothing, their food; we ourselves act upon material objects, lifting and carrying them with our hands, destroying, distributing, molding and disposing of them according to our fancy. One man has power to influence another by means of instruction, commands, warnings, threats, promises, or by his example in word and deed. We can see, therefore, that creatures influence each other in numberless ways, but God's action exercises an influence of a peculiarly strong and powerful nature over all His creatures. No sparrow can fall to the ground, nor a hair from our head, unless He wills it; He preserves all His creatures, guiding their whole existence, their life, and all their actions. Such is the influence of

God upon the things of nature; but He also exerts a supernatural action upon the powers of our souls. What are these powers? Just as our body has two arms and hands with which to do its work, so the soul is possessed of two arms and hands, as it were, by means of which all its operations are accomplished. They are: understanding and free will. How does God act upon these powers? First, He enlightens our understanding. The understanding may be described as the eyesight of the soul, and sight we know is useless in the dark. We assist our eyes by bringing a light near to them, or by lighting up the object we wish to look at: or we strengthen our sight with spectacles or with a microscope or a telescope. Therefore, when God wishes to help our understanding He enlightens it, so that we may see things which were before unseen, and recognize what otherwise would remain shrouded in darkness; then the purpose for which we were created, and the road by which we may travel to our goal, becomes plain to us; the value of good works, the virtue of suffering, the danger of temptation, the power of prayer, the horrors of sin, are made clearly apparent. Try to imagine a prisoner lying in chains in a dark dungeon; the door of his prison is wide open, but he can not see it. Suddenly a flash of lightning illuminates the whole place, revealing to him for the first time a means of escape. Hope springs up within him and, rising, he gropes his way to the door as best he can.

How does God work upon the will? By inclining it to avoid evil and to do good. As all mate-

rial objects have a tendency to fall to the earth, so the will of man is inclined toward evil from his childhood; and, just as the lifeless object lying on the earth is inert and incapable of raising itself, so also is our will incapable by itself of desiring and striving after our supernatural good. How, then, is it to be moved? Material objects are moved by being drawn, thrown, pushed, or raised by some exterior force; so, by the grace of God, is our will lifted up and moved to do good and avoid evil. A dead stone can be thrown to a great height by the strength of a boy's arm, and a projectile can be projected an enormous distance by some of the latest guns; but still more wonderful is the power of the grace of God on our weak human will. Think again for a moment of that prisoner in his dungeon. The first flash of lightning showed him the way out, but heavy chains still bind him to the wall. Suppose another flash of lightning were to come and shatter the iron chain, how quickly would he then rush to free himself from his state of captivity! The first lightning flash enabled his eyes to see the way out, the second destroyed his chains and gave him power to move. This is exactly what actual grace does for us: it enlightens our understanding and moves our will to do good and to avoid evil. For the present let this suffice, but later on we shall divide actual graces into those which enlighten the understanding and those which move and work upon the will.

II

Secondly, we ask ourselves how far is grace necessary. The catechism asks: "Is grace nec-

essary to salvation?" And answers: "Grace is necessary to salvation because without it we can do nothing to merit heaven." This is one of the most important truths of our religion; in fact, the proposition that without the grace of God it is impossible to be saved is one which all Christians must know and believe.

It is true that man can do some good by his own power; his understanding is not in total darkness, nor is his will absolutely incapable; but since the reign of original sin he has been, as it were, crippled and half blind—unable to see well, and hardly capable of standing or moving alone. How could one in such a condition have strength to battle with a whole army of powerful enemies? Grace is necessary even to enable him then to overcome temptation and avoid evil, and when it becomes a question of doing good, we find that without the help of God he can do absolutely nothing. "Without Me you can do nothing," says our Saviour. We have not power so much as to frame a single salutary thought, or advance a small step nearer salvation, nor even to pronounce the name of Jesus with faith and confidence, much less accomplish any of the works necessary to salvation, without the help of God's grace: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God"—"And no man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost"—"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to accomplish." Therefore, such things as prayer, conversion, good works, and perseverance are all impossibilities without the help of actual grace; and if it

be impossible without grace to find either the beginning or the middle or the end of the road leading to salvation, it follows that we can not without God's help attain eternal blessedness. This is a truth which we are bound to believe, and one that should humble us. We have a task to accomplish, a vocation to fulfill. We are called to everlasting life, and woe to us if we fail to attain it! Now, consider a moment. Can you alone and by your own efforts reach this goal? I answer, Never! Never! Whether you are at the beginning or near the end of your life, whether you be saints or sinners, whether the grace bestowed on you has been much or little, you can not by your own efforts and without the constant help of God's grace attain your eternal end. Do what you will, invoke heaven or hell, call upon the past, or upon the future, appeal to your own powers or the help of others, nothing in the whole wide world except the grace of God will be able to afford you any assistance. Alas, without God, what are we but lost souls, less than nothing! This thought should be a constant source and well-spring of humility. But we can do all things in Him who strengthens us. By His grace we can know, desire, and long for eternal life, and by constantly striving after it we can finally deserve to obtain it. Amen.

SERMON II

On Actual Grace

"God, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 *Tim.* ii. 4).

We have still to answer two of our questions concerning actual grace. We will now endeavor, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to tell you:

I. To whom it is given.
II. What are its effects.

I

God gives to all men sufficient grace to enable them to avoid sin, to fulfill their obligation of keeping the commandments, and to work out their salvation.

It is easy to recognize the justice of this, for on the one side the treasure of the divine grace is immeasurably great. However freely God dispenses His graces the source is never diminished, the treasury can not be exhausted; this furnishes one reason why all men may count on receiving the grace of God. Then, again, God is infinitely good and it is His desire that all men should attain salvation: "Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." As it is impossible for us to be saved, or even make one step forward toward salvation without the help of God's grace, it follows, if we consider these undeniable facts in their relation

to one another, that God must be willing to bestow His grace on all mankind. The Church has always taught this doctrine and it has been at all times firmly believed by the faithful. All views not in accordance with it must be rejected as heresy.

But when the Church teaches that the grace of God is given to all men, she does not mean to say that all will receive exactly the same degree and measure of grace. This is certainly not the case. No one could assert that the holy angels all received exactly the same amount of grace from God, and none of us could aspire to be favored with such signal marks of grace as the Blessed Virgin Mary. It often seems to us that others are able easily to overcome temptations of which we can hardly trust ourselves even to think; that they can successfully undertake work so arduous and wearisome that we should be overwhelmed by it; endure sufferings at which we shudder with horror, and advance along the road to salvation with rapid, firm steps, while we ourselves scarcely move an inch forward from year to year. Is this all because one man is more willing, more brave and persevering than another? That partially explains it; but once we bear in mind and realize that men are made very differently from the beginning, that they vary mentally as well as physically, that the education they receive, their circumstances, position, and surroundings are often as wide asunder as the poles; we no longer wonder that God distributes His grace in different and varying degree and measure among them. But a further question now arises. If the meas-

ure and number of graces which each individual receives vary so greatly and are determined by the will of God, who bestows His grace as He wishes, what is the smallest amount which any individual may receive? Even those who are least favored receive enough "for sanctification and salvation." When a rope is thrown from the shore to a drowning man his safety depends upon his being able to reach and seize the end of it. If it comes near enough to him he can save himself; if not he will drown. But you must observe that, however near to the man the rope may be thrown, it will not itself suffice to save him. He must stretch out his arm, seize it with his hand, and hold it whilst he is pulled in again to shore. If he does not make the effort to take it, or if he looses his hold on it or throws it from him, he will drown, although he had the chance of being saved. God gives the necessary grace to all men to save themselves; but are all saved? By no means. All receive the necessary grace; some make use of it and attain salvation—in their case grace is effectual; but others do not make use of it and are not saved, and yet they, too, have received the grace necessary to salvation.

Now when we go on to ask whether grace is invariably effectual or ineffectual, according as it is made use of or not, we come to an abyss of immeasurably deep questions which have never been completely answered, although many learned and holy men have tried long and earnestly to do so. Let us be content to leave them alone altogether, making merely these two reflections which have a very strong bearing on the Christian life.

If the grace of God is so necessary to us and yet so unequally distributed, then it is very important to try to obtain from God a good measure of it, pressed down, and flowing over. How can we do this?

1. First, we must pray diligently for it. Certainly, you may say, but in order to pray the grace of God is necessary: without it prayer is impossible. Quite true, but probably the first, the most usual, the most universal grace which God gives to man is the power to pray; it may be the end of the rope He throws to us. Why should God bestow many graces upon us if we do not even take the trouble to ask Him for them? "Ask and you shall receive." The secret of the Christian life, the great remedy which all can use in the attainment of salvation, is *prayer.* 2. The other means by which to obtain an abundance of graces is to make good use of each one as God gives it to us; by so doing we shall deserve more and greater graces at His hands; no matter how rich a man may be he would soon tire of wasting money in giving alms to a beggar who invariably made a bad use of what he received.

II

The last question we have to answer is: "What are the effects of grace?" We know that it works upon the two powers of our soul, our understanding and our will, enlightening the understanding and moving the will. But is its effect to compel us to act in a certain way, or does it leave our will free to decide for ourselves? A balance that is evenly poised will always incline to the side

which bears the heavier weight. But let us suppose a balance with some hidden power of its own by which it is able to turn the scale either way as it likes, altogether regardless of the weight it holds. Ought we to compare man with the first or the second of these scales? Let us try another illustration. When Columbus was making his first voyage of discovery and had already been a long time at sea without finding land, his crew grew tired of the expedition and were anxious to turn back. But Columbus induced them to go on. How did he do it? Not by force, for he was only one against many. He exerted his influence over them; he gave them a splendid example of courage, and held to his conviction that they would discover land. He worked upon their feelings by telling them of the honor and glory and gain that would be theirs if their undertaking was successful, and of the shame which awaited them if they returned home defeated. He induced them to go on, not by force, but by influence. Later on another Spaniard discovered a new country, and, at the first sight of the hordes of warlike inhabitants it contained, this man's crew also wished to beat a retreat. They, too, were induced to remain, but how? Not by personal influence this time. Possibly that was tried first; they were compelled to stay whether they liked it or not. Their leader burned their ships so that they were obliged to stay; they had no choice. Now how does grace work upon our wills? By force? No, it does not compel us to anything, it tries to influence us certainly, to touch our hearts, by representing to

us the goodness of God, the hatefulness of sin, the horrors of hell, the beauties of heaven, telling us to repent and to atone, and to deny ourselves. It works upon our wills, but does not force us in any way: our will is left quite free.

If grace worked upon our wills by force, compelling us, then in every case it would effect its purpose. It would be irresistible. But this is not so: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." Without doubt, our Saviour is here referring to the numerous graces He wanted to bestow on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and complains that they were rejected. "And thou wouldst not." "We admonish you that you receive not the grace of God in vain," says St. Paul to the faithful. It is clear that the grace of God can be bestowed upon a man in vain, if he resists its influence. "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Therefore, it depends upon our own will whether we listen to the voice of God and accept His grace, or whether we harden our hearts against it.

God is powerful enough to give His grace to man in such a way that the human will could not resist it, but He does not do so, and it is easy to see why He does not. If grace were irresistible what would be the result? One would have to say that the damned are in hell because they received no grace from God, for if they had they must have been saved by it; their condemnation would be unjust. The blessed in heaven would not have earned their eternal happiness at all, for

it would be merely the result of grace which they had no power to withstand; their good works would be due solely to God and not in any way to themselves. If the effect of grace were to compel us, then there would be neither merit nor guilt any more. Some souls would be condemned unjustly, and others would be rewarded without merit. No; the grace of God neither forces nor compels any man either interiorly or exteriorly, but leaves him his free will unimpaired and unfettered. Oh, if we could but see and understand the rich treasure of grace which flows without ceasing from the heart of God into the souls of men, shedding upon the earth a greater radiance than the sun's brightest rays! Grace illumines us with flashes of light by which we are moved, urged, spurred forward to good works; it is present in us through every good deed that we do, preventing, furthering, completing all our actions and helping us on to salvation. God visits with His grace the just and the unjust, the believer and the unbeliever, at such times and in such measure as His providence sees fit; but always in such a way as to leave the free will of man unfettered. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, choose therefore life, that both thou and thy seed shall live."

Oh, my dear brethren, since everything depends upon the grace of God, may we receive it gratefully, use it conscientiously, and by its help attain to everlasting life. Amen.

SERMON III

On Sanctifying Grace

"You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God" (1 *Cor.* vi. 11).

We have divided grace into two great classes: Actual grace, which acts transiently upon the soul, and sanctifying grace, which remains permanently within us. We have already considered the first, and we will devote our instruction to-day to the second of these two kinds of grace, examining, with the help of the Holy Ghost:

I. What is sanctifying grace?
II. What must precede it in the soul?

I

What is sanctifying grace? "Sanctifying grace is that grace which makes the soul holy and pleasing to God." Sanctifying grace is, like all other graces, a gift, a supernatural gift, and in a very special manner an unmerited gift. Although grace is always unmerited, still we feel almost entitled to expect from God, who is so good, that measure of actual grace without which we could not save our souls. But the bestowal of sanctifying grace upon us is so great and wonderful a thing that it would be presumptuous on our part to hope for it had He Himself not told us of it. A beggar sitting at a rich man's gate with outstretched hand might reasonably expect to re-

ceive an alms, and is hardly surprised when it is given to him; but if the rich man were to invite him into his house, clothe him in his own garments, feed him at his table and, adopting him as his son, make him heir to all his possessions, that would be generosity such as the beggar in his wildest moments would never have dreamed of.

Now when God gives us sanctifying grace, He acts somewhat in the same way, for "it is that grace which makes the soul holy and pleasing to God"; by it He adopts us as His children and makes us heirs of heaven. "Behold," says St. John, full of astonishment and admiration, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 *John* iii. 1).

If we consider the words of the catechism closely we shall see that they do not exactly tell us what sanctifying grace is, but only describe its effects upon us. It is a gift which "makes us holy and pleasing to God." It is by its effects on the soul that we can best realize it, and we often find that those things which do not lend themselves to accurate definitions and close analysis come to be understood through the study of their results. Take for example electricity. That it exists is certain, but no one can define it; one who had studied it for forty years was obliged to admit, when asked precisely in what it consists: "It is impossible to say." But its effects are obvious: it produces light; it lifts and moves great weights, trains, boats, and powerful machines of every kind are worked by it; it conveys news to

great distances with lightning rapidity, and carries sounds to far-off places. In the same way we can describe the operations of sanctifying grace. What does it do in our souls? It makes those who receive it holy and pleasing to God, children of God, and heirs of heaven. These are great and wonderful benefits, though invisible and intangible, but we may come to understand sanctifying grace still better if we divide its work within us into two classes: What it removes from the soul and what it infuses into the soul. Firstly, then, sanctifying grace remits sin and its punishment. What virtue this implies! When sanctifying grace enters the soul at that moment our sins are blotted out, be they few and trifling, or as numerous as the sands on the shore and as red as scarlet. They are blotted out forever, never again to be remembered, while at the same time the punishment due to them is remitted. Such is the power of sanctifying grace. It penetrates into the very center of the soul, and its effects reach into eternity; by it the soul is cleansed in a moment from the results of years of sin and crime and evil passions. It justifies a man in the sight of God, and for this reason it is sometimes called justifying grace. But it does more than this. Secondly, it renews and sanctifies the soul and confers on it a likeness to the Blessed Trinity. This is why it was said of Adam, in whom sanctifying grace existed, that he was created to the image of God; and St. Paul tells us that the faithful are made to the likeness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When this likeness is imprinted on the soul of a man he becomes pleas-

ing to God; when he is pleasing to God He adopts him as His son, and he is therefore heir to the kingdom of heaven. "But if sons, then heirs also, heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ."

The Fathers of the Church have illustrated these two operations of grace in the soul—the remission of sin and the inward sanctification—by a comparison with the effect of fire upon iron. If a piece of rusty iron is placed in a fierce fire what will be the effect of the heat upon it? In the first place, all signs of rust will at once be consumed by the fire; moreover, the iron itself will begin to resemble the fire in many ways. Whereas it was cold, it becomes hot; it was dark, but it begins to glow; it was hard, but it becomes soft and pliable; in fact, it was iron, but it is now bright and glowing and flame-colored like the fire.

But which of these effects of grace takes place first in the soul, and which is the result of the other? The answer is that they are simultaneous. As the soul is cleansed it is also sanctified, and when a soul is sanctified it is at the same time cleansed from sin. But it may be that, although two things happen at the same time, one will be the cause and the other the effect. When a window is blown open by the wind, the air rushes in. It is the wind that caused the window to open and allow the air to pass through. And so with sanctifying grace; by making the soul holy it cleanses it from sin, just as the action of the fire upon the iron destroyed the stains of rust.

II

Now that we have considered sanctifying grace and its effects, we must go on to ask what is the beginning of the work of sanctification and justification, or by what is it preceded in the soul? It is preceded by a preventive actual grace, which enlightens the sinner and moves him to turn to God. A king or queen who intends to pay a visit to a favored subject will always despatch a messenger to announce the coming visit beforehand, and so allow time for the necessary preparations to be made; in the same way the approach of sanctifying grace is made known to our soul. God sends a preventing actual grace on before, which enables the sinner to see the malice of sin, its dangers, its consequences, its punishment, and the final miserable state of the sinner; it moves him to fear the justice of God, to repent of his sins, and by awakening in his heart a ray of hope, a spark of love, determines him to turn to God and be reconciled to Him. The sinner himself must co-operate with this grace, and if he does so the result will be that he will make ready to receive the Sacrament of Baptism; or, if he be already baptized, the sacrament of Penance, the two great means by which sinners receive sanctifying grace, or, as it is called when applied to sinners, justifying grace. The parable of the prodigal son, told by our Saviour to His apostles, puts before us the whole process of the justification of the sinner and the sanctification of the soul more strikingly and consolingly than any other words can ever do.

This prodigal son demanded his portion of his

father's substance, and having received it he forsook his country and his home and left his father without a word of farewell. He went abroad into a far country and there he wasted his substance living riotously. This is a picture of the sinner who turns away from God.

There came a famine in that country, and we see the rich man's son starving and serving a stranger as a slave; feeding the swine and coveting even the husks that they had for their food. This is a picture of the misery and the punishment of sin.

But now grace begins to work. "Returning to himself, he said, etc.," he had received an illuminating grace; a ray of light lit up his soul and showed him his wickedness, his folly, the misery he was enduring and the further unhappiness that awaited him. He began to contrast his lot with that of the servants in his father's house: "How many servants in my father's house abound with bread and I here perish with hunger." Here we have a picture of illuminating grace. It immediately produced disgust at his own behavior, a longing for home, a faint hope, and then a resolution to return to his father: "I will arise and go to my father." This gives us a picture of a "preventive" grace. And he co-operated with it. He went home and was received with mercy and kindness: "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him." He was expecting him, and had been looking out for him for many days, and he was "moved with compassion." The traces of hunger, the ragged garments, the naked feet of his son filled him with

pity, and he ran to meet him, more anxious even to bestow his forgiveness than the son was to ask for it; he fell upon his neck and kissed him. His son acknowledged his sin with contrition: but he heard no word of reproach from his father's lips; for he stopped him with his fatherly embraces, and would hardly let him finish his confession. He then ordered the first robe to be brought quickly —sanctifying grace; put a ring on his son's hand —a sign that he was restored to his inheritance; shoes upon his feet—new graces to help him along the road to heaven; and killed the fatted calf that they might feast together—this is a symbol of the holy communion which follows on our reconciliation with God in the sacrament of Penance—the glorious conclusion of the work of sanctifying grace.

Now what advice shall I give you at the close of this meditation? What we have to do is obvious. We must, one and all, ask ourselves earnestly whether we are in a state of grace, that is, sanctifying grace. If the answer is no, then make haste, like the prodigal son, to return to your Father's arms. If you go to Him with repentance, you will receive the same compassionate, fatherly, gracious reception that awaited the prodigal son. If you have good reason to hope that you are now in a state of grace, then beware of falling into sin. Remember what a treasure you possess; there is nothing more precious in this world: you are the child of God, heir to the kingdom of heaven, and the brother of Jesus Christ. Remember, too, how easily this treasure can be lost. A single mortal sin destroys it, and though you can

part from it so easily no unaided effort of yours has power to regain it. It is an unmerited gift to us from God. It is wonderful that He should give it to us in the first instance, but that He should restore it to us when we have lost it is almost beyond our power to understand: "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Amen.

SERMON IV

On Good Works

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit" (*Matt.* vii. 17).

In our last meditation we considered sanctifying, or justifying, grace, and also those graces which precede it in the heart of the sinner. Now we will see what the fruits are which it produces in the soul; they are called good works, or meritorious works. With the help of the Holy Ghost, we will consider to-day the following points:

I. Good works.
II. Their reward.
III. The different kinds of good works.

I

When in the ordinary way we speak of "merit" we mean usually some work or task, the performance of which is meritorious. But it is possible also to use the word with reference to the earnings or profit derived from the work; or, finally, in connection with the reward which the work deserves. The word "merit" always brings to our mind the performance of some work worthy of reward; and a reward corresponding to the work done. The Archangel Raphael, in human form, accompanied the younger Tobias on a long journey and protected him, rendering him many services. When they reached home again Tobias asked his father: "Father, what wages shall we

give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits? . . . But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of one-half of all things that have been brought." The services which the archangel rendered on the journey was the work: and the half of all the things gained was to be his reward.

1. Now we may perform works meriting a reward from God, and it is of good works such as these of which we are going to speak to-day. The first thing that is necessary before a man can perform any meritorious action is that he be in a state of grace. This is a recognized and undoubted truth. "What," you ask, "can a person who is in a state of mortal sin never acquire any merit?" No. But surely he can still do good works? Certainly, and it often happens that men who are not in a state of grace perform many acts of charity, fulfill all the duties of their state, pray earnestly, and attend the divine services. But these works can not be called meritorious, for they can lay no claim to a reward from God. Why not? Firstly, because God has offered no reward for them, and, secondly, because a man who is in a state of mortal sin has earned for himself eternal punishment. The two things would be incompatible. A man under sentence of eternal punishment can not have a claim at the same time on the reward of heaven. The two things are irreconcilable.

It is a fact, then, that a man in a state of mortal sin can not acquire merit by the performance of good works. Is it, consequently, useless for such a man to do good works of any kind? By

no means; for, although it is true to say that no reward is due to him, yet God does not let any meritorious act go altogether unrecognized. Cornelius, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, was doubtless a sinner; but he prayed and he gave alms to the poor. And what happened in his case? He was inspired to send for St. Peter, who also received the inspiration to answer his summons. Cornelius received the grace of faith, was baptized and absolved, and received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. All these graces were not merited by Cornelius, but doubtless God bestowed them on him in view of the many good deeds of his past life, rewarding him by selecting him as the first among the pagans to be baptized. Therefore, sinners should not give up the practice of good works. God repays them sometimes, although no reward is due to them, by temporal favors, by help in temporal troubles, or by the bestowal of some grace which ultimately leads to conversion. But the faithful who are in a state of grace earn by their good works a definite reward which has been promised. They are the children of God, the brothers of Jesus Christ, branches of the vine which is Christ Himself; they are members of His body; their works are as the works of Christ Himself, and have been rendered fruitful, precious, meritorious, justified in the sight of God by His precious blood.

2. The second condition necessary to gain merit is that good works be performed during our pilgrimage on earth, that is to say, during the course of our mortal lives: "Work, so long as it is day; for the night cometh wherein no man can work."

The laborers in the vineyard received their reward, even those who were called at the eleventh hour. When evening came, however, no more laborers were allowed to enter the vineyard; only work done in the daytime received payment. The saints in heaven perform good works without ceasing. They pray, they praise God continually, their love of God rises up like tongues of fire from their souls; these are all good works, but their time for acquiring merit and earning fresh rewards is over. The souls in purgatory, too, are in a state of grace; they are full of holy desires, they are full of hope, they love God, they bear their sufferings patiently; but for them also the day is over and the night has come.

These, then, are the chief conditions under which meritorious works must be performed; they must be undertaken when we are in a state of grace and during the course of our natural life. It is almost unnecessary to add that they must be really in themselves good and meritorious works performed with the help of the grace of God.

II

Now that we have seen under what conditions a good work is meritorious and deserving of a reward from God, we will consider the reward which God will give us. Firstly, we earn for ourselves an increase of grace; and secondly, eternal happiness.

We can not gain for ourselves the gift of sanctifying grace in the first instance, but we can deserve to have it strengthened and increased in our

souls when we already possess it. "He that is just let him be justified still; he that is holy let him be sanctified still." It is true in regard to many things that the use of them does not tend to diminish their strength, but rather to increase it. If a man continually uses his arm to swing a hammer he will find it growing stronger and more muscular; people who live in the mountains, and who are, therefore, obliged to do a good deal of climbing up and down, will generally be better walkers than the inhabitants of a town. Memory can be trained to learn dates, names, and written passages by heart, and the effort becomes easier by practice. The human voice, too, is strengthened and deepened by exercise in singing and speaking, so also the grace of God is increased in our souls by the continual endeavor to perform good works.

The most precious reward for our meritorious works is the everlasting happiness of heaven. This reward has been explicitly promised to us: "I have fought the good fight: I have finished my course; I have kept the Faith." These are St. Paul's words after a life devoted to every kind of good work. He goes on to say: "Moreover, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give me in that day." Why does he call it "the crown of justice"? Because he has earned it by all the good he has done in his life; it is his due and the Judge will give it to him, because it is but just that he should receive it.

O my dear brethren, who can describe this wonderful reward which we have power to earn for

ourselves by our good works? How great, how rich, how continuous, how satisfying it is; only to think of it and consider it well should spur us on to accomplish our long and wearisome task. In recent years some new goldfields were discovered in North America, out of which large sums of money could be realized at the cost of a few days' work. But what work! These goldfields then lay in an uninhabited region, where there were no houses or provisions of any kind. The winters are long, with months of hard frost; distances were great and journeys had to be made across mountains where there were no roads or railways. The tracks were lined with the remains of those who perished by the way. Yet many braved these perils, attracted by the hope of gain; they overcame all difficulties, encouraged by the thought of what awaited them, and endured hardships and toil spurred on by the greatness of the reward before them. Oh, let us labor like this for heaven! "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is very great in heaven." Could any reward be greater than God Himself? Set to work now, you who are old, for the evening is already closing in; make up for the opportunities you have neglected during a long life. And you young people, work hard also, for you do not know how long your time may last. Life is short; let us strive all we can for the reward promised by God when our day here below is done. We have so many opportunities, so many different ways open to us for gaining merit: Love of God and of our neighbor; the fulfillment of the duties of our position and of our daily life. And now let us

consider for a few moments those good works which are especially recommended by Holy Scripture.

III

Holy Scripture particularly recommends three works as being pre-eminently good: prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds: these comprise all works of devotion, self-denial, and charity. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold." These are the words of Tobias in Holy Scripture and if further proof be needed of the excellence of these works we have but to glance at the lives of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, and above all at that of our blessed Saviour Himself. Did He not pray the whole night long, and fast for forty days without interruption? Was not His whole life, and His death, too, devoted to the practice of brotherly love and charity? Let me here explain that in speaking of prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, Holy Scripture means us to understand by the word "prayer" all forms of devotion—meditations, sermons, assisting at Holy Mass, etc.; the word "fasting" applies not only to abstention from food, but to every kind of self-denial in drink, sleep, amusements, and pleasures, and everything that gratifies the senses; and the word "almsdeeds" means the expression of love of our neighbor, either by spiritual or corporal works of mercy.

What a large choice of good works is offered us! They are innumerable, some great, some small, some easy, some difficult, some to be done

openly, others to be practised in secret. Could any Christian pretend there was nothing he was capable of undertaking? The old and the young, those in health, as well as those who are sick, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, all can find something specially suited to them. One and all, we must attempt something: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."

But the success of our good works depends almost entirely upon the intention with which they are performed. Let me explain. When a sportsman takes out his gun, hoping to bring home a full bag, two things are necessary. First, some game must come within range and, secondly, he must succeed in hitting it; this is impossible unless he takes accurate aim. Now it is the same with us and our good works. Unless we take very true aim we shall accomplish nothing. What we mean by forming our intention is that our aim should be directed to honoring and pleasing God in all we do, saying from our hearts: "My God, I offer Thee my thoughts, my words, and my works." "All to the honor and glory of God," or "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." So our whole life is offered to God, to serve Him and deserve His generous reward. Oh, my dear brethren, if we did but remember to do this, what a rich prize we should gain! So many of you are in trouble, overwhelmed with work, bowed down with sorrow and suffering; only say from your hearts, "God be praised," and your troubles will earn you a reward. There are many who are always complaining loudly of all they have to bear and with no result. Let them say,

instead, "To the glory of God," and God, their taskmaster, will repay them generously. Let us work to do good, so long as it is day, and let us do it all for the honor of God, directing our intention in this way at least once a day in our morning prayers, and again, if we can, as we go to our work, or when we begin our daily tasks. "All to Thine honor and for Thy sake, my God." Then each day's work and our whole life will become a willing service of our divine master, and our reward in the next world, when this life is over, will be great, indeed. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is very great in heaven." Amen.

SERMON V

On the Sacraments

"How turn you again to the weak and needy elements" (*Gal.* iv. 9).

Now that we have seen what grace is, and that we have considered the two principal kinds of grace, actual grace and sanctifying or habitual grace, and the fruits—namely, meritorious works—which we can bring forth with the help of grace, it is important that we should learn the ways and means by which grace can be acquired. We learn from the catechism that we may obtain God's grace chiefly by prayer and the holy sacraments.

God in His goodness might see fit to give us His grace without our making any effort to obtain it, just as fertilizing rain sometimes falls upon soil which no one has thought of watering. In hot, dry places, however, artificial means have to be employed to bring water to the thirsty earth from wells, or by conducting it in canals; and in just the same way God Himself has recommended us to have recourse to certain methods by which grace may be conducted artificially, as it were, from heaven into our souls. We have just heard that this is to be done by prayer and the holy sacraments, and for this reason they are called "means of grace."

There is a great difference between these two means of grace, and we can easily point it out to you by a simple illustration. There are two

kinds of money, metal money and paper money, and the difference between them is this: The value of metal money is intrinsic all the world over, the metal of which it is made has a market value; paper money, on the contrary, has absolutely no intrinsic worth, being nothing but a scrap of paper. But on the face of this paper is a statement entitling the holder of it to a certain sum of money, and it is this statement that constitutes its value. If the State which circulates these notes is in a sound financial condition, the piece of paper is worth the sum of money it represents, and this is quite a usual form of tender in many countries. In the same way, prayer, considered in itself, is looked upon merely as a string of words by which we express our feelings and desires and has no intrinsic value; it is from the repeated promises of Jesus Christ that prayer will be answered, from which is derived its immense worth as a means of obtaining grace. The sacraments, on the other hand, contain grace in themselves; they are, as it were, the real coin of the realm, and prayer may be likened to paper money.

We will begin our meditation on the first of these two means of grace, the holy sacraments, by asking with the catechism, "What is a sacrament?" And answering, "A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace to our souls." By this answer we see that three things are necessary for a sacrament:

I. An outward sign.
II. An inward grace.
III. Institution by Jesus Christ.

We will take these three points as the subject of our instruction to-day, considering them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The first thing to be found in every sacrament is an outward sign. Now what is a sign? We must think this over carefully, for it forms the whole foundation of our explanations on the sacraments. A sign is that by which something is indicated, demonstrated, or represented. There are certain natural signs, which by their own nature indicate and denote something else. For instance, smoke coming out of a chimney implies a fire inside the house; a sad face is a sign of a sorrowful heart—a natural sign. There are other signs which we may call artificial or arbitrary, such as black clothes indicating mourning and sorrow. Pictures, statues, and images of all kinds are signs; every kind of printed or written letters are signs representing the sounds we use in speech; all words, too, are signs signifying the thing we mean to speak of. Indeed, language in every country is made up of signs. We may say that intercourse between men is entirely carried on by means of them. If they did not exist there would be no such things as speech or language, or writing, or art, or telephone, or telegraph. A sign, therefore, is that by which some other thing is signified and represented.

An outward sign is a necessary part of every sacrament and it generally consists of two things, matter and form. The matter is some material object which is used in the administration of the

sacrament, as the water in Baptism, chrism in Confirmation, holy oil in Extreme Unction. The form is the form of words used, which are pronounced by the minister of the sacrament, as he administers it. The outward sign of a sacrament consists, then, of the material thing used, and the form of words spoken in administering it.

Finding, as we do, these outward signs in every sacrament, we naturally ask what they represent. They represent the grace of God. What kind of grace? The particular grace peculiar to each individual sacrament. A chemist labels his bottles and jars with the name of the drug they contain; the name on the label represents some particular medicine contained in the bottle or jar. So the outward sign of every sacrament represents the particular grace which that sacrament contains.

II

The inward grace conferred in each sacrament is the next point to consider. The holy sacraments impart an invisible grace to our souls, although the outward sign which indicates it is visible. The sign is an outward sign, the grace is an inward grace. Now what is the connection between the outward sign of a sacrament and the inward grace it confers? Does the sign merely represent the grace? No, it does far more than that; it produces it, which is very different. The morning star is a sign: it shows the wanderer in the dark that daylight is coming, but if it were not followed by the sun the day would never begin; it foretells the daylight, but it does not produce it. The rising sun is also a sign that the

day is approaching; but it not only denotes it, it creates it; it causes the daylight. Now shall we compare this outward sign of a sacrament with the morning star or with the rising sun? Clearly, with the rising sun, because the outward sign not only represents the grace of the sacraments, it is also the actual cause of the work they do.

Now we come to the question why our Saviour should have bound up interior supernatural heavenly graces in such a remarkable way, with material, tangible, earthly things. Firstly, our Saviour's own person united the infinitely holy and incomprehensible nature of God with His outward and visible humanity. Secondly, it is fitting that the Church, which is an outward and visible institution, should dispense God's graces by outward and visible means. Thirdly, men, who are the recipients of the sacraments, are made up of an invisible soul and a visible body; it is, therefore, in the nature of things that the inward and supernatural graces of the sacraments should be conveyed to them by visible and natural means. Fourthly, men are sinners, and since sin is generally committed through the natural senses, it is but right that grace should come by the same means. Fifthly, because grace is conveyed to us by outward signs we know definitely what particular grace we have received, and this is a great spiritual consolation which we should not always enjoy if the sacraments operated by silent and invisible means only.

III

The third thing necessary to every sacrament is that it must have been instituted by Jesus

Christ. Why should this be? We have only to recall to our minds the nature of a sacrament to understand it. It is a sign which not only represents a grace, but also produces it. If, indeed, the sacraments were merely symbols of the grace of God they might be instituted by any one; it would not be a difficult matter to find signs to symbolize and represent an interior grace. When we represent the Holy Ghost as a dove crowned with a halo from which stream seven rays of light we have a symbol of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, although it neither produces them nor bestows them on us. Signs and symbols, however, which not only represent graces, but also impart them, can only be instituted by the possessor and the origin of all grace, Our Lord Jesus Christ. No man, no priest, bishop, pope, or apostle possesses the power to institute a sacrament. There can, therefore, be no sacraments but those instituted by Jesus Christ, and we have no power either to increase or diminish their number.

This fact constitutes a fresh reason for prizing and cherishing the sacraments and for learning to appreciate them more and more deeply. They are means of grace signifying grace for us, signs containing grace in themselves, signs instituted by Jesus Christ and which He alone could have instituted, signs which are themselves as precious as the grace which they represent and contain. To a man with weak eyes who can not see without artificial aid, glasses are as precious as the eyes themselves; and, if there were only one spectacle-maker in the world, such a man would be entirely dependent upon him. Let us realize,

then, how important the sacraments are for us, and prize them as we ought as means of grace and of eternal salvation. They are far more precious than any earthly remedies and medicines, of greater worth than gold and precious stones; for this reason let us try to deepen our knowledge and our appreciation of them by following with great attention the instructions which, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we propose to give you on this subject. Amen.

SERMON VI

On the Efficacy of the Sacraments

"You shall draw water with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (*Is.* xii. 3).

In our last meditation, while considering the nature of a sacrament, we found that three things are necessary in order to make a sacrament: Outward sign, inward grace, and institution by Jesus Christ.

Seven sacraments fulfilling these three conditions have been instituted by Our Lord, namely: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The Church teaches us expressly that Christ instituted these seven sacraments and no others. Tradition confirms this teaching, and it can be proved from Holy Scripture, as we will show you when we come to consider each sacrament separately.

We may, perhaps, wonder why Our Lord decreed that the number of sacraments should be exactly seven—no more and no less. The best answer of all is that the eternal wisdom considered these seven sacraments necessary and helpful to our salvation, and that more would have been superfluous. People who have gone deeply into these things point out that in Holy Scripture the number "seven" seems to possess some mysterious significance. The days of the week are seven, to commemorate the six days of creation

followed by the Lord's day of rest; the gifts of the Holy Ghost are seven; wisdom built itself a house supported by seven pillars; a seven-branched candlestick burned in the Temple. In the Book of Revelations St. John tells how he saw the Son of Man holding in His hand seven stars; seven angels sound the trumpets, and the angels who carried the vials full of the wrath of God were also seven in number. Finally, a book is mentioned sealed with seven seals, which the Lamb only could unloose. It may be that these seven seals foreshadowed the seven sacraments, which could be devised, instituted, and rendered efficacious only by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

St. Bonaventure gives a beautiful reason why the number of the sacraments should be precisely seven. Complete restoration to health after illness implies total eradication of the disease by which we have been attacked; now, fallen man is suffering from seven great evils. There is the three-fold evil of sin: Original sin, which is removed by Baptism; mortal sin, which is wiped out by Penance, and venial sin, which is taken away by Extreme Unction. Further, four evils afflict the human race as a punishment for original sin: Ignorance, which is dispelled by the sacrament of Holy Orders; wickedness, which is counteracted by the Holy Eucharist; weakness, which is fortified by Confirmation, and sensuality, whose antidote is in the sacrament of Matrimony. This holy teacher supplies many more solutions and explanations, but it must suffice for us that the Eternal Wisdom, who arranges and disposes all things in order and by measure, has without

doubt seen good reason for fixing the number of sacraments at seven, although it is not given to us to understand completely why and wherefore.

We will, therefore, pass on to consider, with the help of the Holy Ghost, the efficacy of the sacraments. The catechism ascribes to them three forms of grace in particular.

I

The catechism tells us that "some of the sacraments *give* sanctifying grace, and others increase it in our souls." That is to say, some of the sacraments impart sanctifying grace to the soul, and others increase and strengthen it when it is already there.

We have already learned what sanctifying grace is and what are its effects upon the soul. By it sin is driven away and destroyed as effectively as light dispels and drives away darkness. It justifies and sanctifies the soul, and restores in it the image of God, transforming it by the likeness of God which He imprints on it Himself. This likeness is engraven not upon perishable pages of linen or wood or iron, but on the immortal soul; it is not the picture of some perishable creature, but that of the thrice-holy God Almighty. It is a picture so beautiful and so beautifying that the soul which bears it becomes at once pleasing to God, worthy to be called His child and heir of heaven! Of what a wonderful efficacy are these sacraments possessed which impart sanctifying grace to our souls! Baptism and Penance are the two sacraments of this kind, and because those who receive them are in a state

of sin, and not in a state of grace, they are called sacraments of the dead—for they may be received by those whose souls are dead to eternal life.

The other sacraments increase the grace of God in our souls; they deepen the likeness of God in our hearts, so that we become more and more pleasing to Him and worthier of the inheritance of heaven. These other five sacraments are received by those whose souls are already living and in a state of grace, and therefore they are called the sacraments of the living.

II

The sacraments further communicate to us the peculiar grace contained by each one according to the end for which it was instituted. By Baptism a man is made a Christian; he becomes a member of the body of Christ and receives those graces necessary to the life of a Christian. By Confirmation he is made a soldier of Christ and receives grace to wage war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is endowed with arms for the spiritual combat; no general would put his men into the field without equipping them for the campaign! The Blessed Eucharist is the sacrament of spiritual progress, the sacrament of growth in grace and perfection. Just as no one can take, day by day, good wholesome nourishment for the body without increasing in strength and growth, neither is it possible to receive the Blessed Sacrament often and worthily without advancing in humility and charity. Penance is the healing sacrament whereby the wounds of the soul are made whole. It gives actual grace, which helps us to avoid occasions of sin, to break the

chains of habit, and to overcome temptation. Extreme Unction is the sacrament of the sick and dying. Those who receive it gain grace to bear their sufferings, to detach themselves from this life, to resist the fear of death, and to be successful in that last decisive and awful struggle. Holy Orders is the sacrament which consecrates men to the priesthood and gives them every grace necessary to perform their sacred and difficult duties. Matrimony blesses the union of man and woman in marriage and enables them to fulfill the duties of their state. Thus every sacrament imparts to him who receives it a particular grace which is the special end of the institution of that sacrament.

III

A third effect of grace, produced by a few of the sacraments only, is "to imprint a character in the soul; a spiritual mark which remains forever." There are three sacraments which set such a mark upon the soul: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Why these three only? Briefly, because these sacraments raise the soul to a certain position, and mark it as belonging to that position. Baptism makes a man a Christian and a member of the body of Christ. By Confirmation he becomes a fighting member of the army of Christ, and by Holy Orders a leader in the spiritual warfare. A man who has once been admitted to any of these positions has attained that rank once and for always, and can never require to receive these sacraments again. Therefore, they are never conferred twice upon the same person.

Now we can see how the sacraments may easily be divided into several classes according to the graces they impart to us. Some of them give us sanctifying grace and are called the sacraments of the dead; these are Baptism and Penance. Others strengthen and increase sanctifying grace and are called sacraments of the living: Confirmation, the Blessed Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Three sacraments only make an indelible mark upon the soul and, therefore, may be received but once, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders; the remaining four may be received more than once.

Let us never forget how great the work of grace in the sacraments is, and let us at the same time remember the seeming insignificance of the outward signs of these graces. A drop of water, of oil, a few words spoken by the priest or bishop, a gentle imposition of hands, a light mark on the forehead! Oh, my God, you have indeed made the simplest, commonest things to co-operate with the most sublime workings of grace, penetrating into the depths of hell and reaching up to heaven itself! Dearly beloved brethren, let us never despise the sacraments because they appear to us so simple and ordinary, but let us, on the contrary, be careful to revere the wonderful graces they contain all the more because they are produced by such simple means, and because these means are ordained to help us to salvation. Let us speak of the sacraments with reverence and gratitude always, and try to use them in such a way that they may fulfill in us the purpose for which they were instituted. Amen.

SERMON VII

On the Worthy and Valid Reception of the Sacraments

"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 *Cor.* xi. 29).

The grace of the sacraments produces three different effects in our souls. They either bestow sanctifying grace upon us, or they increase it when we already possess it, and each sacrament communicates a special grace peculiar to it according to the end for which it was instituted. Moreover, three of them imprint an ineffaceable and indelible mark upon the soul.

But it would be quite a mistake to suppose that every one who receives a sacrament necessarily receives also the grace belonging to it, for this is certainly not the case. The grace of the sacraments is communicated only to those who receive them in proper dispositions. We have, therefore, to face the important question: When is a sacrament received worthily and when unworthily? Many will say on hearing this: "Yes, I have often heard discussions as to whether a sacrament was valid or invalid." No doubt you have, but let me at once tell you emphatically that the validity of a sacrament is not at all the same thing as its worthy reception, and an invalid sacrament is something quite different from one unworthily received. What is the difference? This important question will form the subject of our instruc-

tion to-day; and with the help of the Holy Ghost we will consider two points:

I. When is a sacrament valid?
II. When is a sacrament worthily received?

I

A sacrament is valid when no one of those things which go to constitute the sacrament is wanting. These things are, beside the intention of the minister, the outward signs which, as we have already heard, consist of matter—as water, bread, oil, wine, etc.—and form, which are the words pronounced by the minister of the sacrament. If these things are not wanting, then the sacrament is validly administered, let the character of the minister be what it may, whether the recipient be a saint or a sinner, and whether or not it be accompanied by full ceremonial and administered in a church; none of these things are of the least moment—it is a valid sacrament. But, on the other hand, if any one of these necessary things be left out, even unintentionally and by the fault of no one, it is not a valid sacrament; it is invalid and must be received again. An illustration will help to make this clear: A bank-note may be genuine, or it may be forged. A man will scrutinize the paper of a note to see if it is of the right texture, he will examine the appearance of the printed words and numbers, and hold it up to the light to find the genuine water-mark. If he finds everything correct he knows it is a real bank-note; and no matter how torn and old and dirty it may be it still remains genuine, even though the owner of it is a scoundrel who has

obtained it by theft and who will put it to a bad use; none of these things can affect its validity. It is a genuine bank-note so long as it possesses marks that prove its validity.

On the other hand, if we find what purports to be a bank-note not printed on genuine paper, not properly engraved and water-marked, or defective in any way, it would not be a genuine note even though it belonged to the most upright and honorable of men; it would be useless to him, because it would not be genuine and valid.

We can test the validity of a sacrament in the same way. If all the necessary outward signs are present it is valid, but if something has been omitted or altered it is invalid.

II

To prove the validity of a sacrament, however, is no guarantee that it has been worthily received. This brings us to the second part of our instruction.

In deciding whether a sacrament has been received worthily or not we must turn our attention to the recipient, or rather to his dispositions when he approaches the sacraments. We are our own best judges in this case, for no one can know better than ourselves what the state of our souls is at such moments. The man who eats of a dish is the most competent to pronounce upon its flavor and its effects. Now, when do we receive a sacrament worthily? When we are properly prepared for it and are in the right dispositions. These dispositions vary according to the nature of the sacrament. For instance, the end of the

sacraments of the living is to increase sanctifying grace in our souls, so that to receive them worthily we must be already in a state of grace. As regards the sacraments of the living we may lay it down as a general rule that those who receive them in a state of grace receive them worthily, but that those who approach them in a state of mortal sin receive them unworthily. The sacraments of the dead, however, may be approached in a state of sin, for the end of these sacraments is to raise us up out of sin to a state of grace; by them sanctifying grace is imparted to the soul. One thing only is absolutely essential to them, namely, that sincere contrition for sin which can only be the fruit of faith. To receive one of the sacraments of the dead with true contrition is to receive it worthily, but to receive it without contrition is to receive it unworthily.

The catechism gives us a warning on this subject in the following question and answer: "Do the sacraments always give grace?" "The sacraments always give grace if we receive them with the proper dispositions." It is true the sacraments consist of grace in themselves, through their institution by Jesus Christ and the merits of His precious blood; but it is also true that they can produce no effects in our souls if we do not prepare ourselves for their reception. If you sow good seed in soil that has never been tilled or manured the rain will water it, the sun warm it, and the dew fall upon it in vain; it will bring forth only a crop of thorns and thistles.

The catechism goes on to ask: "What sin does he commit who receives the sacraments of

the living in mortal sin?" The answer is a further warning to us: "He who receives the sacraments of the living in mortal sin commits a sacrilege, which is a great sin, because it is an abuse of a sacred thing." To receive a sacrament unworthily is to be guilty of sacrilege; this may be easily demonstrated. We know already what constitutes an unworthy reception of a sacrament. Now let us recall what a sacrilege is. It is the profanation of some holy person, place, or thing, consecrated to God. Could anything be more holy than the sacraments, instituted by God Himself, containing the grace of God, and consecrated as means of attaining holiness and salvation? They are, moreover, as a rule administered by consecrated people in consecrated places, so that nothing could be more sacred from every point of view. Undoubtedly, those who receive the sacraments unworthily profane them. The Temple in Jerusalem was a consecrated place, and it was profaned by the buying and selling of sheep and doves, and the trading of money-changers. Do you remember our Saviour's indignation? In no other place in Holy Scripture do we read that He raised His hand in anger against any one. He did not strike the Pharisees, or Judas, or Pilate, or His executioners. But when He saw how the house of His Father was profaned He took a scourge of little cords and drove out both the buyers and sellers, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers. Great, indeed, must be the wrath of God against those who profane His sacraments, the holiest things on earth.

A man who receives a sacrament unworthily is also guilty of a personal insult against Our Lord. No Christian can fail to see this. The sacraments are the work of Jesus Christ, one might almost say His lifework. They are the fruits of His passion, of His cross and death. He instituted the Blessed Eucharist the very night before His death and the sacrament of Penance the very first evening after His resurrection, that they might be closely and intimately connected with the shedding of His blood, for it was from His precious blood they were derived. The seven sacraments are, indeed, our Saviour's claim to glory. In his revelations St. John saw that He who sat upon the throne held in His right hand a book, sealed with seven seals. An angel cried out with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?" There was no one able either in heaven or on earth or under the earth. But he saw a Lamb standing upon the throne, "as it were slain," and he had seven horns and seven eyes. And the Lamb took the book out of the right hand of God and opened it. Then there arose a new song: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood." And thousands and thousands of voices cried out, saying: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and benediction." What a wonderful song of praise in honor of Jesus Christ, the Lamb that was slain, who redeemed us in His blood and gave us the holy

sacraments. The book is the book of the elect, and its seven seals are the sacraments. If Christ is so glorified in heaven because of the sacraments is it not just that we should honor them upon earth? Oh, my God, how we insult You by receiving them without due preparation, our souls unclean and stained; we are not worthy to join in that song of praise: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive praise and honor and glory and benediction."

Those who receive the sacraments unworthily sin against Holy Church; for the most precious legacy Christ has left her, the most efficacious means of salvation, is the sacraments. This treasure must be zealously guarded and carefully distributed. Out of love for Christ the Church must guard the sacraments from dishonor, and out of love for the faithful she must dispense their graces freely and encourage frequent recourse to them. Therefore, with trembling hands and with ceremonies full of holy meaning and words of true devotion she gives them to us, and those who approach them without trembling, totally unprepared, with no devotion in their hearts, grieve their Mother the Church very deeply.

They sin, also, against themselves. Once in the Middle Ages, when the plague was raging, the water in the wells was found to be poisoned, and there was a general outburst of fury against those who were suspected of so malicious a deed. It was certainly a horrible crime to infect the springs from which the people could draw pure, fresh water. But what can we think of one who poisons his own supply? It is folly, wickedness,

little short of suicide. Well, those who dishonor the sacraments do much the same thing; they convert the well-springs of grace and life into sources of sin and destruction. What was the fate of the wedding-guest who had not troubled to put on a wedding garment? "Cast him into exterior darkness."

We may apply to all the sacraments the words in which St. Thomas spoke of the Blessed Eucharist:

> Sumunt boni, sumunt mali,
> Sorte tamen inæquali
> Vitae vel interitus.
>
> Both the wicked and the good
> Eat of this celestial food,
> But with ends how opposite!
> Here 'tis life and there 'tis death.
> The same, yet issuing to each
> In a difference infinite.

May every sacrament we receive lead us not toward eternal death, but forward on the road to eternal life. Amen.

SERMON VIII

On the Outward Signs of Baptism

"Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he shall not enter into the kingdom of God" (*John* iii. 5).

Hitherto in our meditations we have considered the nature of a sacrament, the things which constitute a sacrament, and the graces the sacraments have power to impart to us. Further, we have seen what is necessary to make a sacrament valid as well as how to receive it worthily. We will now proceed to consider each sacrament individually, beginning with Baptism.

Baptism is the first and most necessary of the sacraments. This does not mean that it is the highest of them all. In this sense the Blessed Eucharist must always be the first and highest, for it contains Jesus Christ Himself. Baptism is the first sacrament in the sense that it is the door that gives access to all the others, and that we must receive it before we can validly receive them.

Baptism is the most necessary of all the sacraments, because without it no man can attain salvation. Many will be saved who have never received Confirmation or Penance or the Blessed Eucharist or Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, or Matrimony; but without Baptism no one can be saved. Does this mean that all those who die before they are baptized are necessarily lost souls?

No, but it is necessary at least to desire to be baptized, and so we may say that unless we either receive the sacrament of Baptism, or earnestly desire to do so, we can not be saved.

After these preliminary remarks we may begin our instruction on Baptism by proposing three simple questions:

I. What is the outward sign in Baptism?
II. What is the inward grace?
III. Who are the persons concerned in the sacrament?

With the help of the Holy Ghost we will today confine ourselves to answering the first of these questions. What is the outward sign in Baptism? The catechism tells us: "Whoever baptizes should pour water on the head of the person to be baptized, and say while pouring the water, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'" We see, therefore, that in this sacrament the outward sign consists of two things, the water and the words.

I

The water is absolutely necessary for the valid administration of the sacrament of Baptism. Natural water of any kind will do, whether out of the sea or from a river or a stream or pool; it may be rain-water or water from melted snow; it is immaterial what kind of water is used or whether it be warm or cold, fresh or stale, clear or muddy, blest or unblest. The validity of the sacrament requires only that water of some kind be used; any other kind of liquid, therefore, even

if chiefly composed of water, such as wine or beer or vinegar, will not answer this requirement.

When a baptism is celebrated in a church, regular baptismal water is used. This is natural water, but it is consecrated in a special manner, with great ceremony on Holy Saturday or on the eve of Pentecost, in all churches which possess a baptismal font. It is not the same as holy water. The differences are these: Baptismal water is blessed differently; it contains two kinds of holy oil consecrated by a bishop, whereas holy water contains only blessed salt. They are blessed at different times: Baptismal water is blessed only on two days in the year, but holy water may be blessed and renewed at any time. Then, again, baptismal water is kept only in a church in the baptismal font, whereas holy water is always kept in stoups at the entrance to a church, and even in private houses. Baptism can be validly administered by using holy water, and it is to be preferred to plain natural water; but if baptismal water is available it must be used; failing that, holy water, and if holy water is unobtainable then plain water will do. The one thing necessary is that water of some kind be used or the sacrament will not be valid.

Now, what is to be done with this water, which is of such vital necessity? It must be poured over the head of the person to be baptized. It is poured over the head as being the most important part of the body, and over the forehead because it is the most readily accessible part of the head. In early days baptism by immersion was the usual way of administering the sacrament. The head

was dipped three times in the water, or the water was poured three times over the head while the person receiving baptism stood in the water. In the Middle Ages baptism by aspersion or sprinkling with water was sometimes used; nowadays the invariable rule of the Church is to pour water on the head of the person to be baptized.

II

The second thing necessary for the valid administration of Baptism is the use of the words prescribed: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." These words must be pronounced by the person who is administering the sacrament, that is to say, by the person who pours the water. In what language must these words be spoken? A priest in baptizing employs the language of the Church and speaks the words in Latin; but when in a case of necessity any one else is called upon to baptize he is free to use whatever language is most familiar to him, which will generally be his mother-tongue.

Are the words to be spoken in any special way? Must they be said loud or low, actually pronounced with the lips or said in the heart? It is immaterial whether the words be spoken loud or low, but it is absolutely essential that they be actually pronounced with the lips, for if they are repeated silently, in the heart only, the sacrament will not be valid; the words are a necessary part of the outward sign.

The words must be pronounced while the water is poured upon the forehead, or we may say the

water must be poured upon the head while the words are being said. That is to say, they must happen simultaneously. The catechism tells us this, although it may have escaped our notice: "Whoever baptizes should pour water on the head of the person to be baptized, and say *while pouring the water:* 'I baptize thee, etc.'" There is no need to be anxious and suffer from scruples if the pouring of the water and the repetition of the words do not begin and end together, exactly at the same moment. It is enough that the pouring of the water and the uttering of the words should take place, morally speaking, at the same time, showing that they go together and are dependent on one another.

You may wonder why we have spent so much time over the outward sign of Baptism. It is because this is the first and most necessary sacrament, and everything depends upon its valid administration. In almost every house and family it happens at some time or other that a delicate baby—too weak to live many hours—is born, for whom baptism in a church is out of the question. But it need not die unbaptized; that would be an unspeakable calamity. If it be baptized it becomes an heir to the kingdom of Heaven. Happy child, to die thus early and, leaving all earthly suffering, enter eternal life as the child of God! Who shall baptize it? Any one who, with the full intention of administering the sacrament, employs the required outward signs. That is why it is so important that we should have a clear knowledge of the outward sign of baptism. All we have to do is this: Pour the water on the head of the

child, saying at the same time these words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Let us retrace our steps for a moment. We began by saying that Baptism is the first of all the sacraments, the door admitting us to all the others, without which we can never receive them validly. But see how wide this door stands open to receive great and small, young and old, even new-born children. We further told you it was the most necessary of all the sacraments, and essential to salvation. But how easily obtainable it is and how simple to administer, requiring only a few drops of water within the reach of all. Wherever men live, wherever they build houses, there is water. In the desert perhaps there may be a lack of it, but the desert is uninhabited by men. What wisdom and goodness our Saviour has shown in ordaining that the outward sign of a sacrament, so necessary and so important, should be a thing so easily obtainable as water! A little water and a few words—simple words which we all know, which a child can remember and repeat; words which all of us, who have learned the sign of the cross, can already say by heart. We thank Thee, most kind and gracious Lord, that Thou hast made the marvelous graces of holy Baptism depend on outward signs so wonderfully simple that any of us can procure and make use of them. Amen.

SERMON IX

On the Effects of Baptism

"But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified" (1 *Cor.* vi. 11).

In our last meditation we considered the outward sign of Baptism. It consists of water poured upon the head and joined to the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." To-day we will consider the inward effects of Baptism. The catechism tells us that Baptism (1) cleanses us from original sin and all other sins; (2) that it remits all punishment due to us, both temporal and eternal; (3) that it communicates sanctifying grace to our souls; (4) that it imprints upon the soul a mark that remains forever and makes us Christians and children of God and heirs of heaven. A glance will show us that these graces are capable of being divided into two classes:

I. Those things which Baptism removes from the soul.

II. Those things which Baptism imparts to the soul.

I

Sin and the punishment due to sin are cleared away from the soul by Baptism. First and foremost, the soul is cleansed from original sin, a disfiguring stain which no other sacrament has power to remove. How we should prize any such

remedy for the cure of some disfiguring physical ailment, such as leprosy or lupus. Original sin is a stain upon our souls from birth, and it has been handed down to all men from Adam. The mark goes deep, and is so disfiguring that the soul which still bears it is displeasing to God, the child of His wrath, shut out from His kingdom. Heaven and earth join in honoring the Blessed Virgin, because her soul was from the first moment of her being free from the stain of original sin. We praise the power of God because He was able to protect His holy Mother against all those onslaughts of evil which beset the rest of mankind; shall we not also praise this holy sacrament, which is able to cleanse our souls in an instant from the deep-rooted and hateful stain of original sin?

Baptism cleanses us not only from original sin, but from all other kinds of sin. In Christian countries Baptism is usually administered only to infants, who have of course no stain upon their souls except original sin. But it sometimes happens that grown-up people seek Baptism, and their souls are disfigured not only by original sin, but by actual sin also. Do you remember the 3000 Jews who were converted by St. Peter's words on the first day of Pentecost? "Do penance," he said to them, "and be baptized, every one of you." Now, in their case the sacrament would remove not only the stain of original sin, but of all other sins, mortal and venial, which they had committed since their birth. It was the same with the thousands of men converted by St. Paul. In his epistles to the Corinthians he enumerates

some of the sins and vices to which the heathens were addicted, and adds: "And such some of you were; but you are washed, but you are sanctified." He meant that all their sins and crimes had been washed away by the waters of Baptism. So it used to be and so it is now. In heathen countries, where the messengers of the Gospel carry on their labors, it happens almost daily that grown men are converted and cleansed by Baptism from all the sins of their whole lives. How marvelous that by the operations of grace, set in motion by a little water and a few words, the countless sins of a whole lifetime should be washed away in an instant!

The punishment due to our sins is also wiped out by Baptism. The sinner labors under a heavy load of debt to Almighty God. By a mortal sin he incurs eternal punishment, and by venial sins temporal punishment, which he must undergo either on earth or in purgatory. Will the sinner say, like the man in the Gospel: "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all"? All? Everything? It would have been an impossibility even to the servant in the parable. His debt was 10,000 talents, and even if he and his whole family had worked and denied themselves for the rest of their lives they could never have raised such a sum. Can we say, then, "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all"? Do we mean that we are ready to undergo and endure all the punishment we have merited by our venial sins? Such a task would be almost beyond our strength. But what shall we say of the eternal punishment due to mortal sin? Are we prepared to endure that?

Even the lost souls in hell, although they suffer unceasingly, never become reconciled to working out their punishment. So, you see, we require more than the taking away of our sins; the punishment due to them must also be remitted. All this the sacrament of Baptism does for us. It wipes out original sin and actual sin, mortal and venial. It removes all the punishment which we have incurred—temporal and eternal. The newly baptized soul is pure and free—unstained by sin and unburdened by any debt of punishment.

II

Next we must turn our thoughts to those things which Baptism bestows on us. At the same moment that the soul is freed from sin and punishment it receives the gift of sanctifying grace. We have already seen what a wonderful and precious thing sanctifying grace is. The soul that receives it acquires a supernatural likeness to God and becomes the child of God. Till now he was the child of God's wrath, but henceforth he is the child of God, taken, we may say, into the bosom of God's family. This is practically equivalent to saying that in Baptism he is endowed with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. We know that in a happily constituted family the various members of it live in perfect accord with one another. There is community of ideas and community of goods between them, and mutual love and dependence is cultivated at the same time. Well, when the newly baptized soul receives the three theological virtues, the gift of faith causes its thoughts to be in complete accord with the

mind of God, and to accept His words as truth; hope teaches the soul to desire the things of God, to wish to share them with Him and possess the good things He has promised us; and by charity the soul learns to love God, with the love He has shown us from all eternity. Thus the soul is equipped to live a life of love as a member of the family of God.

You may think it strange that a new-born child can possess the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Of course we are not suggesting that he believes definite things or desires any particular thing, or can direct his love toward a particular person, but still he has received in Baptism the gifts of faith, hope, and charity. I will explain this to you by asking you a question. Has not a new-born child got feet? Yes, and yet he can neither stand nor walk. He has a tongue, but he can not speak; he has a mind, yet he can not frame any definite thought. In the same way he possesses faith, hope, and charity, although he can not yet exercise them. The capabilities of these virtues are in his soul; he is, indeed, richly endowed!

When the newly baptized soul is received into the family of God, it is marked with an ineffaceable character. It is stamped as one who has been made like to God and to His only Son, Jesus Christ, and who is a member of God's family on earth, the Catholic Church. Although he may lose grace in after life, though he may ultimately lose his soul, yet it will always bear upon it a mark showing that it was once admitted to the communion of the children of God. Neither sin nor vice, nor hell-fire itself, can remove this mark

from the soul. We must either wear it in glory forever or carry it as a brand of shame. In certain old families one hears of a wonderful likeness which repeats itself from generation to generation. When a member of such a family pursues a life of sin and vice, his disgrace is intensified not only by the name he bears, but also by his very features, which proclaim his honorable birth and high connections.

Let us review once more the effects of Baptism. By it all our sins, original and actual, are wiped out; all punishment is remitted; sanctifying grace is bestowed on us and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are infused into our soul. We are made the children of God and members of Jesus Christ and of His Church, and our souls receive a mark or character which will remain forever. These are, indeed, great graces! What a blessing we have enjoyed in receiving Baptism as infants, even before we could realize the riches that were being bestowed on us, just as an infant prince becomes heir to a crown and kingdom without having the least idea of his good fortune. Ought we not to give thanks to God for such a grace which thousands among the pagan races have never had an opportunity of receiving, and of which even many children of Christian parents are deprived, it may be through carelessness or through sudden death. We must thank God, too, that He did not call us away from this world before we were able to appreciate and be grateful for the grace of Baptism. Have we not many reasons for striving to preserve this gift inviolate? "Receive this white garment," says the

priest, "and carry it unspotted before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ." When we lose the grace of Baptism and trample it underfoot, so that it would seem better to have died directly we were baptized, or even before Baptism, we have indeed cause to weep tears of bitter sorrow and contrition. Thoughts such as these should come to our minds every time we see a baptismal font; each time we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross and particularly on the feast of the Blessed Trinity, for we were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Catholic parents can show their gratitude for the grace of Baptism by taking care that their new-born children are baptized as soon as possible. There is an obligation to enter their birth on the civil register and a penalty is attached to the neglect of this regulation. Yet, though the children reap such wonderful benefits, Baptism is sometimes deferred for weeks. Did they but know what we know and believe, their desire would be great to receive Baptism and become the children of God. Amen.

SERMON X

On the Persons who take part in a Baptism

"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (*Matt.* xxviii. 19).

OUR instructions for the two last Sundays have been devoted to the explanation of the outward sign and the inward grace of the sacrament of Baptism; anything of importance that still remains to be said on this subject can be considered in our discourse to-day, which will deal with *the persons who take part in a baptism.*

I

The author of the sacrament.—Who instituted the sacrament of Baptism? There is entire agreement on this subject as regards the teaching of both Scripture and tradition all over the Christian world, and in all ages. Christ is the author and founder of holy Baptism. There are various opinions, however, as to the exact moment at which Christ instituted this sacrament. Some Fathers of the Church hold that it was already in existence when our Saviour allowed St. John to baptize Him, thereby sanctifying the waters of the Jordan by contact with His sacred body. Others think that it was instituted just before His ascension from Mount Olivet, when He took His farewell of the world, saying to His apostles: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." At any rate, by these words He gave His sanction to the administration of Baptism, and even if the institution had not taken place before it undoubtedly took place then.

II

Let us now go on to the recipient of the sacrament. Who is capable of receiving Baptism? Any person who has not already been baptized; we have seen that Baptism is one of those sacraments which can not be repeated. Any living person may receive Baptism; at one time the custom prevailed of baptizing still-born infants, or infants who had died young, but this was an error. Two things are required: The recipient of the sacrament must be living, and must not have been baptized before. No other qualification is necessary; therefore, there is nothing to prevent new-born children being baptized soon after birth. A few days after birth is the usual time for Baptism, and parents are exhorted not to defer it beyond that time. The Church teaches that it is wrong to delay conferring this sacrament, and the children themselves, were they capable of understanding the benefits of Baptism, would plead their own cause: "Oh, my dear parents," they would say, "see that I receive quickly the one sacrament I am able to receive. I am your child by birth, let me become the child of God, too. My life is feeble and precarious; let me be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, for the world to come. If I die without this sacrament, life will have been of no benefit to me.

But if I am baptized before I die, I shall have lived long enough for the door of heaven to be opened to me. Oh, hasten to let me receive this sacrament. I will not cease to lament till I possess the one thing necessary for me, which the Church my Mother is anxiously waiting to bestow on me."

III

The third person we have to consider is the minister of the sacrament of Baptism. Who is he? Any one—lay person, woman, child, even people who are not Catholics, who have never been baptized themselves, any one and every one —can administer this sacrament validly. This is another instance of the goodness and mercy of God. Baptism being of such importance and so essential to us, the power to administer it one to another has been given to all men. The outward sign of the sacrament must of course be correctly employed, the water being poured upon the head of the candidate at the same time that the words are spoken aloud. It also goes without saying that the minister must have the intention of administering Baptism, that sacrament which Christ instituted, which the Church dispenses. For this reason I am of opinion that the baptism of the martyr St. Genesius was not valid. He was a pagan actor and on one occasion in Alexandria acted the part of a convert to Christianity in a play holding the Christian religion up to ridicule. The play went on to represent him as applying for Baptism to a Christian bishop, who, after questioning him on matters of faith, baptized him

on the stage, pronouncing the words and pouring water on his head, all, of course, in make-believe. But Genesius, bowing down before the emperor, cried out that at the moment when the water fell upon his head he suddenly became convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and declared himself ready to give his life for the Faith. The audience applauded, thinking this was all part of the play, but Genesius at last succeeded in making them understand that he was in earnest and had really become a Christian, and the emperor caused him to be executed forthwith. Now, was such a Baptism valid? I am afraid I must answer no, for although there was the outward sign yet the intention necessary to the administering of a sacrament was absent. Yet, although this was so, St. Genesius did not die unbaptized, for in suffering martyrdom he received a Baptism of blood, which is sufficient to produce all the effects of the Baptism of water, for in cases where Baptism of water is impossible, there are still two ways in which the sacrament may be received: Baptism of desire and Baptism of blood. It is easy to define these two things. The Baptism of desire is simply an "ardent wish to receive Baptism, and to do all that God has ordained for our salvation"; while the Baptism of blood consists in "the shedding of one's blood for the Faith of Christ."

We must call your attention to the fact that, although any one may baptize in a case of necessity, yet the ordinary minister is the parish priest, that is to say, the pastor of the parish in which the child is born or where his parents live.

IV

In considering the people who take part in a Baptism we must not omit the god-parents. What part do they play? They have to make a profession of faith in the name of whoever is being baptized. They are asked: "Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?" "And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord?" And they must answer: "I do believe." How, then, you will ask, can we select as god-parents for our children unbelievers who are unable to say in good faith: "I do believe." If they themselves have no faith, they are not suitable people to go surety for the faith of another. "Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?" How can any but a Catholic answer: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church"? It is impossible for those outside its fold to believe in the Church fully, and on this account Catholics alone are fit god-parents for Catholic children. Furthermore, the god-parents make the baptismal vows in the name of the child, renouncing the devil, his works, that is, sin; and his pomps, the occasions of sin. They say, "I renounce the devil and all his works and pomps." They undertake this renunciation in the name of their god-child, and it is only such Catholics as are leading an earnest Christian life that are capable of making such a promise.

The god-parent usually gives the child his Christian name, and I may remark that it is well not to give a child too many names. It generally

results in confusion, owing to differences between the entry in the birth register and the baptismal certificate. It is desirable that a child should be called after a saint and not after some legendary hero, or a character in a novel. It is right that we should make use of the heroes of the Christian faith. The calendar of the saints is rich in the names of men and women, youths and virgins, whose lives were so pure and holy and whose deaths were so beautiful that the very mention of them incites and stimulates us to live as good Christians.

How many god-parents should a child have? In olden times the number was often excessive; it became a point of honor to provide as many sponsors as possible, for the parents gratified their vanity in this way, just as some people pride themselves on the number of guests they can assemble at a party, or even on the length and magnificence of a funeral procession! The Council of Trent laid down a rule that no child should have more than two god-parents, and that one was sufficient. If there are two, one must be a god-father and the other a god-mother. If there is only one it can be either; it is quite admissible to have only a god-mother in the case of a boy and a god-father in the case of a girl.

What responsibility attaches to the position of god-parent? The god-parents are the spiritual father and mother of their god-child; they take the place of the natural parents in case of death, or when these last neglect to give their children a Catholic education. The Catholic conception of this relationship makes it such a close one that

without a very special dispensation the sponsors can neither marry their god-child nor its parents.

All of us here present belong to the number of those who have received the sacrament of Baptism, and we can not sufficiently thank God for so great a blessing. Occasions may arise when any of us may be called upon to administer Baptism; if this should ever happen let us be careful to bear in mind what things are necessary to make it valid. We might at any time be asked to act as god-parent at a baptism; many of us, indeed, have already done so. Remember, therefore, that to do so is not merely an act of courtesy, but that it may, under some circumstances, involve grave responsibilities. Above all, the duty rests upon the god-parents of seeing that the promises made in the name of the child are fulfilled, that he is not merely baptized a Christian, but that he is brought up in the Catholic faith and educated as a Catholic, so that by living in accordance with Catholic teaching he may attain life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON XI

On the Outward Sign and the Institution of the Sacrament of Confirmation

"They laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost" (*Acts* viii. 17).

To-day we will pass on to the subject of Confirmation, which, following the order given in the catechism, comes next to Baptism, and, like Baptism, imprints a character in the soul, and can, therefore, be received only once.

Confirmation is defined as "a sacrament through which we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ." We will consider it in this instruction under two heads, as regards:

I. Its outward sign.
II. Its institution.

I

The outward sign in Confirmation consists in the imposition of hands, the anointing with chrism, and the prayer of the bishop. It is made up, therefore, of three things, all of which the bishop, who is the minister of this sacrament, must employ in administering it: Imposition of hands, anointing, and prayer. In order to understand the full significance of each of these three parts of the outward sign, we will put before you the whole process of the ceremony of Confirmation, as described in the catechism, in answer to

the question: "How does the bishop give Confirmation?" Let us, therefore, imagine ourselves present in a church where Confirmation is being given, and, looking round, let us see what is being done. First, we will watch those about to be confirmed come into the church and take their places; they are for the greater part children who have not very long made their first communion; but we also notice among them a sprinkling of grown-up people, and some even who are quite old. The bishop then appears attired in his full robes of office and holding the pastoral staff in his hand; attended by a number of priests and acolytes, he ascends the steps of the altar. Turning toward those who are to be confirmed, he extends his hands—indeed we might almost say his arms—over them, and prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost, calling down upon them the spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of fortitude, of knowledge, of piety, and of fear of the Lord. Here we have two of the parts necessary to the outward sign of Confirmation, the imposition of hands, laid upon all simultaneously, and the prayer offered for all.

But now comes the actual anointing itself. The candidates for Confirmation usually kneel in a row at the communion rail, not this time to receive holy communion, but to be confirmed. The bishop approaches each one of them separately, and if we pay special attention to what now takes place we shall see the sign proper, so to speak, of Confirmation. First the bishop inserts his thumb into a small vessel which is carried by a priest beside him. What does this vessel contain? It

contains chrism. What is chrism? Chrism is a mixture of oil of olives and balm; olive oil is derived from the fruit of the olive-tree; balm is made from a plant which grows in the East, the leaves of which, when dried and rubbed together, produce a very fine and sweet-smelling powder; these two substances are mixed and solemnly consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday, and are called chrism, and it is this that is contained in the vessel into which the bishop inserts the thumb of his right hand. Having done so, and with his thumb moist with the chrism, he lays his open hand on the head of the one to be confirmed, making at the same time with his thumb the sign of the cross with chrism on his forehead. Here, again, we have two of the parts necessary to the outward sign of Confirmation, the imposition of hands, and the anointing with holy oil. But there is more to follow. With his hand resting on the head of the person to be confirmed, the bishop says the following words: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; and the attendant priest answers, "Amen." This is the third part of the outward sign. These three parts of the outward sign: Imposition of hands, anointing, and prayer, are employed by the bishops in confirming each candidate who presents himself from the first to the last. When all is finished the bishop returns to the altar, and gives his solemn blessing to all those who have just received the sacrament.

II

Three things, therefore, constitute the outward sign of the sacrament of Confirmation: Imposition of hands, anointing, and prayer; when they are rightly employed by the bishop they communicate to the soul that special grace of the Holy Ghost which makes us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ; for Confirmation is a sacrament, i.e., an outward sign by which an inward grace is given.

That would be all very well, you say, had Christ really instituted this sacrament; but show me where you find such a thing recorded. It is not anywhere mentioned in Scripture that Christ either commanded or empowered His apostles to impart the grace of the Holy Ghost by means of imposition of hands, and anointing and prayer.

What answer can we make to such criticisms as this? First, we admit it to be true that the institution of the sacrament of Confirmation is not mentioned in Scripture. Next, we would point out that those who demand chapter and verse of the Bible for every doctrine of faith are on the high road to heresy. For, which dates back the furthest, Scripture, or the Church with its doctrines and belief? Obviously the Church is older than Scripture. Christianity, bishops, and apostles, Christ, His teaching and His Church, with the faith it teaches, would have existed even had there been no scriptural record of them at all. It is the pillars that support the roof, not the roof that supports the pillars. Holy Scripture finds its corroboration in the teaching of the Church, but the Church does not depend upon the word

of Holy Scripture. Therefore, if the Church teaches that Confirmation is a genuine and valid sacrament, it is so, even though we do not find a syllable in connection with its institution in the Bible; and such has always been the definite doctrine and practice of the Church.

But, as a matter of fact, Holy Scripture is not silent on the subject of Confirmation, for it affords actual proof that the apostles did dispense this sacrament. Where do we find this? We find it in the Acts of the Apostles, which certainly form part of the New Testament. Listen to what it relates: "Now, when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For He was not as yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." But you say to me there is not a mention of the word Confirmation! That is true; I quite admit it; but all the signs of it are here to be found and there is no doubt that this passage of Holy Scripture clearly establishes the fact that the apostles administered the sacrament of Confirmation in the city of Samaria; I am not exaggerating its meaning. The apostles were in Jerusalem, where the Christian community was already established; we are not told how many of them were there, but there were certainly several. Suddenly the joyful intelligence reaches them that the greater part of the people of

Samaria had heard the word of God and been converted, becoming Christians and accepting the teaching and the doctrines of Christ. As soon as the apostles received this news, Peter, the head of the Church, and John, the beloved disciple, set out for Samaria. What was their object? To preach to the people? That was not necessary, for they had already had the Gospel announced to them. To baptize them? This had already been done. What end could they have had in view? They went to administer the sacrament of Confirmation. Philip, the deacon, who had preached in Samaria, had no power to do this; two apostles were necessary, and for this reason they traveled thither and were on this occasion the ministers of the sacrament of Confirmation. To whom did they dispense it? To those who had been baptized; they were baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus." What outward signs did they make use of? Those of the sacrament of Confirmation: They prayed that the Holy Ghost might come down on the inhabitants of Samaria; that they might receive His grace; they called down the Holy Spirit upon them—and thus it is that the bishop prays in giving Confirmation; they laid their hands upon them just as he does; only one thing is wanting, namely, the anointing which really forms part of the imposition of hands; otherwise all the outward signs, both as regards the dispenser and the receiver of the sacrament of Confirmation, are explicitly mentioned. The inward grace was communicated by means of these outward signs: "They laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy

Ghost." As they laid their hands upon them, and because they laid their hands upon them, they received the Holy Ghost; at the moment that the hands of the apostles were laid on the people of Samaria they received the Holy Ghost. What, then, did the apostles do in Samaria? They administered a sacrament, an outward sign by which inward grace was communicated. Which sacrament did they administer? It could be no other than the sacrament of Confirmation.

It is, therefore, beyond dispute that the apostles, and notably the head of the Church, accompanied by the best-beloved disciple of the Saviour, administered Confirmation publicly with the sanction of the rest of the apostles, in a large town, in the very earliest days of Christianity. From this it follows that the sacrament of Confirmation was ordained by Christ, for would the apostles have dared to administer a sacrament which He had not instituted? It is idle and foolish to pretend for a single moment that this could be. If it were possible, then, the apostles were not the first promulgators of the Gospel at all; on the contrary, they were the first to falsify it; instead of the pillars of the Church they were its earliest enemies; they were not true disciples of Jesus Christ, but misrepresenters of His teaching. It is clear that the sacrament of Confirmation was instituted by Christ.

Confirmation, therefore, being a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ, we must ardently desire to understand both the outward sign and the hidden meaning; we must earnestly try to realize the great graces it contains; and especially we

must prepare ourselves with zeal for this holy sacrament, if we have not yet been confirmed; and carefully and gratefully treasure its graces, if we have already had the happiness of receiving them. Amen.

SERMON XII

On the Effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation

"And they laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost" (*Acts* viii. 17).

THE outward sign of Confirmation consists in the imposition of hands, the anointing, and the prayer of the bishop. In our last instruction we dwelt on the manner in which this sacrament is administered, and, further, we saw that its ordination by Christ is beyond dispute.

To-day we will consider, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the inward grace bestowed by Confirmation.

The catechism asks: "What are the effects of Confirmation?" And it answers: "The effects of Confirmation are an increase of sanctifying grace, the strengthening of our faith, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost."

I

Confirmation is one of the sacraments of the living, and it is their special characteristic to give an increase of sanctifying grace; we must receive Confirmation in a state of grace, if we do not want to commit a sacrilege. Therefore, if any one who is going to be confirmed has the guilt of a mortal sin on his conscience, he must take steps to recover grace before he presents himself for the sacrament. The Church emphatically urges and warns intending candidates for Confirmation

to make a good confession, if possible even a good general confession, before approaching this great sacrament.

Confirmation, in common with all the other sacraments of the living without exception, gives us an increase of sanctifying grace, but it produces this effect in a very special way. It has been said that man's body has a three-fold growth: In youth, up to about the age of twenty, he grows upward; in middle age he grows in breadth; in old age he grows downward, bending to earth toward the grave. Now, just as the body has power to grow to a given height which, after a certain age has been attained, can not be added to, so Confirmation imparts a measure of sanctifying grace which in one direction can not be exceeded —it bestows the grace of completion, which marks, as it were, the limit of sanctifying grace.

II

Briefly, the increase of sanctifying grace is the first of the effects of Confirmation, but there are others which it will be necessary to examine more fully. It strengthens our faith, and gives us the gifts of the Holy Ghost. This effect of Confirmation is made clear in Scripture in the passage relating to the confirming of the people of Samaria by the apostles: "They laid their hands upon them"; in other words, they administered to them the sacrament of Confirmation, "and they received the Holy Ghost." Plants have each a peculiar healing power and virtue of their own, and every sacrament has its own special characteristic grace. The grace of Confirmation is the spe-

cial remedy which enables us steadfastly to confess our faith and to resist the enemies of our salvation. St. Bonaventure, that great Doctor of the Church, has described this characteristic grace of the sacrament of Confirmation very beautifully, by showing how the inward grace is indicated and symbolized by the outward sign. He says that the salvation of the human race was accomplished through the Eternal Word of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, taking flesh in time, and appearing upon earth. In order that each individual soul may take part in the Redemption it is necessary that the word of God should be received inwardly in the heart of each one, and confessed outwardly and visibly by word and deed; our belief in the truths of religion must assume a practical aspect, so that a man may transform his whole being by means of it. The confession of the faith of a Christian must have three qualities: it must be (1) entire, (2) pleasing, (3) fearless.

The Christian's confession of faith must be entire as regards what he confesses; in other words, a Christian must confess all the truths of religion without exception, and, above all, that Jesus Christ was true God and true man and the mystery of the three persons in one God. The cross made on the forehead at Confirmation symbolizes the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Had He not been truly man He could not have been crucified; had He not been truly God He could not have redeemed us by the cross. Confirmation is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,

words by which belief in the Blessed Trinity is fully and completely confessed.

Further, our confession of faith should be pleasing and agreeable in the eyes of those before whom it is made. Before whom is it made? It is made in the sight of the omniscient God and of our neighbor.

In order to please God a Christian's confession of faith must be illumined by the light of understanding and the radiance of a good conscience. God can not be pleased by a profession of faith which consists merely of words but half understood; neither can he accept as agreeable to Himself the acknowledgment of the faith of one who is constantly by his conduct giving the lie direct to the very truths which he professes to confess. The two conditions which must accompany our profession of faith, if it is to be acceptable to God Almighty, are indicated and symbolized by the oil of which the chrism is composed. Oil burns and gives a clear, steady light; it is a picture of the profession of an enlightened faith, animated and rendered effective by the radiance of a good and pure conscience.

For a Christian's profession of faith to be pleasing in the eyes of others it must be accompanied by the sweet odor of virtue, and of a good name; joined to a spotless reputation and a holy life, it has power to edify, renew, and strengthen our fellow-men whether they be themselves believers or infidels. Nothing is more injurious to the cause of religion than the evil lives of those who profess to be ruled by its principles. The sweet-smelling balsam, mixed with the olive oil

to make the chrism for Confirmation, is symbolic of this good odor which ought to surround all those who profess the truths of Christianity.

Finally, the faith must be confessed fearlessly. A Christian must never be ashamed to acknowledge his faith, nor be induced to waver in it even if threatened by the most serious dangers. The form of the cross, with which the bishop anoints him in Confirmation, typifies this fearless attitude, and is traced in the middle of his forehead, that part of his body which is most in evidence, and where indications of shame and distress would most easily be seen. To bear the cross on the brow is as much as to say: "I am not ashamed of my crucified Lord; the Cross is my banner, my glory, my hope, my love." Such is the language of St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

The fearlessness with which a Christian is to profess his faith in the face of his enemies, and in spite of dangers, threats, and disadvantages, is expressed by the blow upon the cheek. This part of the ceremony signifies that by Confirmation a man stands firm in the truth under the protection of God and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, awaiting from God alone the reward of his efforts.

In this way the holy Doctor St. Bonaventure has connected the outward signs of Confirmation in the most complete manner with the qualities which should mark the profession of the Faith: The quality of entireness is introduced by the sign of the cross and the accompanying words; the

component parts of the chrism—the oil and the balm—indicate that it must be pleasing to God and to man; and its fearlessness is symbolized by the cross on the forehead, and the blow upon the cheek.

The third effect of Confirmation is to imprint on the soul an indelible mark. By this sacrament we are enrolled, so to speak, as fighters—soldiers of Jesus Christ. When a recruit enlists in the army he is first of all given his weapons; he gets a uniform to wear, which shows to what division, brigade, or regiment he belongs. By Confirmation we become soldiers of Christ; it is but natural, then, that we should be marked as members of the Church militant, which wages battle unintermittently, whose victories are without number, and which will be triumphant in heaven for all eternity. It is our glory to wear its uniform.

Having put before you the rich graces communicated by the sacrament of Confirmation, I would like, before closing my instruction, to give you a word of advice, and a warning. If, as we have seen, Confirmation has power to bestow graces so great and so various, what have we to do? Surely we should not only be solicitous and zealous for it ourselves, but we should also look to it that others, our servants, our children, and all under our care receive it also. Confirmation is not, indeed, like Baptism, essential to salvation, but it is very useful and highly conducive to it, for it gives us the strength and the weapons necessary for carrying on our spiritual warfare. What would a soldier do without arms? He

would have no power to defend himself, and in a decisive engagement would certainly be lost. One of the kings of England, when his horse was shot under him in battle, is said to have cried out: "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" He meant to say that at that terrible moment, when so much was at stake, his very kingdom was endangered through his want of a horse. He would certainly have said equally: My kingdom for a sword, for a helmet, for a breastplate! A great deal depends on our being provided with the right weapons for fighting the great spiritual battle which will decide our fate for all eternity. Now, they are put into our hands in Confirmation. The struggle is keen, and the enemies of our soul become more and more numerous and vindictive; the evil of our own nature increases in strength as we grow, and takes shape within us in proportion as the teaching of our early years fades from our minds, and our principles of self-denial retreat into the background. Where formerly we had one bad book there are now hundreds and thousands; what at one time would never have been even tolerated in print at all is now universally read. Bad example is rife all round us; instead of being threatened by one or two dangers, danger seems to be staring us in the face everywhere we look. War rages on all sides; we have no reason to hope for the conclusion of peace. As long as the world exists, as long as there are pilgrims traveling toward eternal life, so long will the fight continue. But the victory is glorious, and receives a glorious reward: "To him that overcometh I will give to

eat of the tree of life." O dearly beloved brethren, if the combat is hard to sustain, even for those who are protected by the armor of the Holy Ghost, what will be the fate of those who rush into the field unarmed, who are too careless, or too lazy, or too presumptuous to have recourse to the means of defense which are at their disposal? I am afraid they can not be acquitted of sin, even grave sin.

And now a word to you, dearly beloved brethren, who have already been confirmed. You have received the Holy Ghost to strengthen your faith; where, then, is your profession of it? Do you acknowledge it in the presence of unbelievers, heretics, and those who make a mockery of religion? Do you at least refrain from taking part in their blasphemous discussions? O where is your loyalty? You are overcome by the lightest breath.

By the grace of the Holy Spirit we have been armed with weapons with which to resist the enemies of our salvation. Can we point to our victories? Have we deserved the promised crown? Can we say, "I have fought the good fight"? Is it not true that at the least temptation we succumb; that often we take flight before the battle has well begun; that we even sometimes throw down our arms without striking a blow; surrender follows surrender; we have neither battles nor victories to report; we have deserved no crown. Dearly beloved brethren, having now fully considered the graces of Confirmation, let those who have not yet been confirmed resolve to receive this great sacrament as soon and as worthily as

they can. We, who have already enjoyed this privilege, will renew our resolution and, taking our weapons in our hands, will march forward with fresh courage to meet the enemy. "Labor as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Amen.

SERMON XIII

On the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

"The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (*John* vi. 52).

We now enter upon the contemplation of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the holiest and most sublime of all the sacraments. It is called the Sacrament of the Altar from its being reserved and offered on the altar, and it is known to us by many other different names, such as "the Holy Eucharist," from the Greek word *Eucharistia,* meaning "good grace," because it contains Jesus Christ Our Lord, the true grace and source of all heavenly gifts. It is called "the Blessed Sacrament" because it contains Jesus Christ, the author of the sacraments, and of all sanctity. It is also called "the Viaticum" (i.e., provision for a journey), because it is given to the sick and dying to strengthen them on their passage to eternity.

Our Saviour had a three-fold purpose and end in instituting the Blessed Sacrament. He foresaw that many people here below would live forsaken by their fellow-men, and find themselves objects of hatred, envy, and indifference to those around them, meeting only with false friends and the pretence and make-believe of love. There is nothing in the world so rare as a true friend or unselfish affection. For this reason He wanted

first to be in this sacrament our friend and companion. Further, He realized how little we poor creatures are in a position to fulfill our highest duty, which is to give glory to God. We give God glory by bringing Him our gifts and offering them to Him. But how small and petty are our poor ideas! Where in the whole wide world can we find anything that is not already His own, or which is worthy to be accepted by the eternal majesty of God? In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Christ has put into our hands a sacrifice worthy of God which we may offer to Him daily.

Our Saviour realized, moreover, that the road to perfection and to heaven is long and steep and full of dangers, and that many souls persevere in it only with great difficulty. "If I shall send them away fasting to their home they will faint in the way." In the Blessed Sacrament He has provided us with food to give us strength on the way to the Holy Mount. Christ has, therefore, instituted the Blessed Sacrament that He may be our companion, our sacrifice, our food.

Corresponding with this three-fold end, we find that the catechism divides its explanations on this sacrament into three parts: One deals with the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for if He is to be in truth our companion He must be really and actually present; another part treats of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, by which we offer to God the gift left us by Jesus Christ; and, finally, the last part is on holy communion, by which Christ becomes the food of our souls.

We will begin with the first part, on the real

presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Our belief in this sublime truth is founded:

I. On the words in which it was promised.
II. On the words in which it was instituted.
III. On the teaching of the apostles and of the Catholic Church.

I

We know that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar because He promised that He would give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink in very truth. In the synagogue at Capharnaum He said to the assembled Jews: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." We are told this saying is not to be taken in its literal sense, that it has reference to faith; but the same chapter that contains this passage gives us other words of our Saviour on faith, so that it is difficult to see how to avoid attaching a literal meaning to the words we have quoted. On the preceding day our Saviour had fed 5000 people in the desert with five barley loaves, and great multitudes had followed Him in hopes of being also fed in the same wonderful way. But our Saviour exhorted them to faith in Him, and their answer was: "What sign . . . dost Thou show that we . . . may believe Thee. Our Fathers did eat manna in the desert." They meant to challenge our Saviour to bring manna down from heaven for them. Now consider the words in which He replied to them: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." This is what He meant to convey to them: "Manna I will not

give you either now or later; but I will give you food of a much more precious and wonderful kind, namely, My own flesh." He compares Himself to manna: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." Manna was produced from the clouds, our Saviour descended from heaven; manna nourished the life of the body, but the Bread of the Saviour was to be for life everlasting. Finally, let us consider the result of our Saviour's words, "the Jews strove among themselves saying, how can this man give us His flesh to eat." Obviously they had taken Our Lord's words to mean literally that His body was to be their food, and they failed to understand how such a thing could be. Had they misunderstood Him? No; our Saviour did not explain and tell them they had not understood Him rightly; on the contrary, He repeats with greater stress and emphasis what He had said before: "Amen, amen I say unto you; except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." He adhered to His statement even though the Jews and many of His disciples forsook Him. What we have related undoubtedly constitutes a promise on the part of our Saviour to institute a sacrament which should contain His flesh and blood to be our food; His flesh to eat and His blood to drink.

II

Our Saviour faithfully performed what He had promised. The evening before His passion He and His apostles were assembled together in a room in Jerusalem; after He had eaten the

paschal lamb with them, according to the manner of the Jews, He took bread and broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take ye and eat, this is My body." Then He took the chalice and gave it to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood. Do this for a commemoration of Me." Clearly, everything depends on how we understand these words of our Saviour. "This is My body, this is My blood." There is no doubt they must be taken literally, for they constitute, as it were, the last will and testament of the Saviour; He says Himself it is the blood of the New Testament. Now, is a will ever drawn up in figurative language? Is it not, on the contrary, always couched in the simplest and clearest terms? I once had occasion to read over the will of a poet whose writings abound in types and metaphors of all kinds; but the will was worded as plainly as it could be. Again, our Saviour's words form the basis and foundation of a new covenant; what kind of language is usually employed to draw up a covenant or contract of any kind? Are figurative and ambiguous expressions ever inserted in such documents? On the contrary, the object is to word them so simply and clearly that they convey the meaning intended and no other. Our Saviour's words, in addition to being a testament, contain a law: "Do this in commemoration of Me." Now, in what terms are laws expressed? As clearly and concisely as possible, so as to admit of no misinterpretation. Finally, our Saviour's words teach a doctrine, an article of faith, offered for the acceptance and belief of future generations. Articles of faith

are invariably submitted in the most simple language. In the Apostles' Creed there is not one word which does not bear its full and literal meaning. To whom did our Saviour speak these words? To His apostles, who had heard Him make the promise. When did He speak them? He spoke them on the evening before His passion after such solemn preparation, and at a moment and under circumstances so fraught with significance that there were a thousand reasons for attaching special weight to all His utterances; can we suppose that under such conditions He had nothing more to say than: "Here is a type and figure of My body"? If this be so, then, our Saviour failed to keep His promise to us in giving us His last testament; He has employed the language of types and figures, so causing the apostles and the Church itself to misunderstand His meaning.

III

That Our Lord is really present in the Blessed Sacrament is the teaching both of the apostles and of the Church. This brings us to our third point. Let St. Paul speak first—that apostle who, though he was not present at the institution, was instructed in these great mysteries by special spiritual revelation. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians he alludes twice to the Blessed Sacrament. In the tenth chapter he says: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" What, therefore, is contained in the chalice? The blood of Christ. And he continues: "And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the

body of the Lord?" What, then, is offered us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? The body and blood of the Lord. In the following chapter, after relating the manner of the institution by Christ, he says: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." In face of such words, can any one be justified in asserting that the Blessed Sacrament is but a figure, a type, a memorial of the body of Christ, and that it is nothing but bread and wine? How can a man be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord by partaking in a state of sin of bread and wine, mere memorials of Christ? No, it can not be. If the words of the Apostle have any meaning at all, they mean what they actually say, and what they say completely bears out the words in which our Saviour promised and instituted the Blessed Sacrament and which clearly proclaim that it really and truly contains the body and blood of Christ.

To our Saviour's own words and to those of His apostles we may add the teaching of all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, all the students and expounders of Holy Scripture, as well as the belief of the faithful for centuries, and the decisions of all the general councils. What do they all unite in saying? They proclaim, as if with one voice: In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the true body and the true blood of Christ are really, truly, and substantially present. This is our faith. May it spur us on to ever greater devotion, deeper reverence, more worthy use of this divine sacrament, so that by it, sustained and upheld, we may reach eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XIV

How Jesus Christ is Present in the Blessed Sacrament

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

The very words used by Jesus Christ when He promised to institute the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, as well as those in which He actually instituted it, attest beyond doubt that He is really and truly present therein. Further, the apostles, particularly St. Paul, in referring to it speak in a way that points to the same conclusion. This, joined to the continuous teaching of the Church—which is manifested in the writings of learned theologians, by the ceremonies connected with the various Church services, by the decisions of her councils, as well as by the universal belief of the faithful—can leave no possible room for doubt. But this truth being clearly established, we have still a great deal to learn about Our Lord's presence among us. To-day we will endeavor, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to answer the first two questions which naturally occur to our minds in connection with it:

I. What brings about Our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament?

II. Under what form does He become present?

I

In answering the question as to what brings about Our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacra-

ment, we shall have to examine closely a number of different causes, all of which are connected and bound together in the closest possible way.

The immediate cause is given by the answer of the catechism to the following question: "What happened when Our Lord said: 'This is My body; this is My blood'? When Our Lord said: 'This is My body,' the substance of the bread was changed into the substance of His body. When he said: 'This is My blood,' the substance of the wine was changed into the substance of His blood." A change is here effected by which the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes His blood; this change, therefore, is the immediate cause of the presence of Christ. But how do we know that such a change has actually taken place? It follows from the actions and words of our Saviour. What did He do? He took in His sacred hands bread—real bread; when He took it in His hands it was *bread.* What did He say? "This is My body." It was, therefore, bread no longer; it had become the body of Christ. How so? Was the bread destroyed? No. Had, then, the body of Christ been miraculously substituted for it? Not that either. The one had been changed into the other; the substance of the bread had been changed into the body of the Lord. The same change had taken place in the wine, which became the blood of Christ.

This was an inward, not an outward change. We men can change ourselves and the objects around us outwardly; but we have no power over the inward nature of things. An actor can trans-

form himself on the stage from a beggar into a king; he can turn from a fool into a wise man. He can effect this by altering his dress, gestures, voice, and way of speaking; but inwardly he remains exactly the same. We often see a sedate, serious man, and later on a heavy, bent old gentleman, develop out of what was originally a merry, lively boy. This is the natural result of the process of time; but great as the transformation appears, the identity of the individual is untouched; the old gentleman is still answerable for the actions of his youth. But the omnipotence of God has power over the innermost being of things, changing them according to His will in the most brief space of time. Therefore, the immediate cause of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the change that takes place in the bread and wine.

But we must go on to inquire how this change is effected. It is the sacred and mysterious words which Jesus at the last supper pronounced over the bread and wine, and which He has commissioned His priests to repeat after Him in the Holy Mass, that bring it about. A few words, softly spoken and repeated by human lips, result in such a marvelous transformation. In their operation they may be likened to the words of God Almighty, who in the beginning of creation said: "Be light made, and light was made." "He spoke and they were made; He commanded and they were created."

The presence of Christ comes to pass by the change of the substance; and the change is effected by the power of words spoken. But

whence can a few softly spoken words, pronounced by a mere human creature, have such power? This question brings us to the last and deepest cause by which the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is induced, namely, the power of God, to whom nothing is impossible. At the last supper the words of Christ had power to change the bread and wine into His body and blood; they were the words of the Almighty Son of God. But how can the words of a poor priest possess such virtue? Because they are spoken in the name of Jesus Christ, at His command and by His power. "Do this in commemoration of Me." Our Saviour in effect said to His apostles at the last supper: "Do what I have just done; take bread and wine in your hands and speak the words that I have spoken; what has now come to pass will come to pass again: the bread will be changed into My body and the wine into My blood." Clearly, by the words, "do this in commemoration of Me," a charge was laid on the apostles to change bread and wine into the sacred body and blood of Christ, and with the charge the power to fulfill it was also given them. It is evident that this power was meant not only for the apostles themselves, but for their successors. Why is this so evident? Because this sacrament was instituted for all mankind. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." If, without participating in these sacred mysteries, we can not have life, it is clear that this heavenly food is offered to all; and if it was meant to exist for all time, then the priests and bishops

who came after the apostles must have received power to consecrate. Therefore, it must be recognized and believed that Jesus Christ gave to His apostles and to their successors, the bishops and priests of His Church, the power to change bread and wine into His sacred body and blood.

II

The second question which we have undertaken to answer is: "Under what form is Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar?" The catechism tells us that, "Jesus Christ is whole and entire, both under the form of bread and under the form of wine." And it goes on to explain that, "after the substance of the bread and wine has been changed into the substance of the body and blood of Our Lord, there remain only the appearances of bread and wine." Now, what is the exact meaning of the words *"there remain only the appearances"* of bread and wine? These words convey that everything perceptible to one or more or all of our five senses together in the bread and wine remains exactly the same as though no change had taken place, and as if the bread and wine were still actually and in substance present. What things, then, are perceptible to the eye? The form, color, size, and shape of the bread and wine. What is perceptible to the tongue? The taste of bread and wine. What does the hand feel? Exactly what it would feel if it were touching bread and wine; and the smell is that of bread and wine. As far as the domain of the senses extends, it is just as though nothing had happened, and yet the inward substance

of the bread and wine have been changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is, therefore, really present in the Blessed Sacrament, but under the appearances of bread and wine. Dearly beloved brethren, what condescension, what self-abasement! In becoming man the Son of God veiled and hid His divinity under the nature of man which He took upon Himself. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." If to take our flesh was a humiliation to the Son of God, how shall we speak of His concealing His humanity under the appearances of bread and wine—His living manhood under the form of death, His enlightened manhood under the most commonplace appearances, His immortal manhood under mortal and destructible shape. Here we have, indeed, the humiliation of humiliations.

It naturally occurs to the mind of every one to wonder why Jesus Christ chose to be present in the Blessed Sacrament under the elements of bread and wine instead of appearing in His real human form.

(a) He did so that we might have the merit of faith. If our Saviour had remained with us in the Blessed Sacrament in His glorified humanity, as He sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and as He will come again one day to judge the living and the dead, it would be not only an easy matter to believe in His presence, but it would be impossible to doubt it; and our faith would earn us no reward. But it is hard to believe that, under the poor appearances of bread and wine, Christ is really and entirely pres-

ent in a living way, although nothing is visible to our senses but bread and wine. It requires a great effort of faith on our part, and it is but just that, where Christ's love for us has led Him to such humiliation, we on our side should offer Him the exercise of our faith in believing what He has told us.

(b) Our Saviour chose to be present under these lowly appearances to give us courage and confidence. If He had shown Himself in the full majesty of His glory, which of us would have dared to approach Him, to speak to Him, to raise our eyes toward Him? We should cry out with the Jews who said to Moses: "Let not the Lord speak to us lest we die." Our Saviour has taken the form of bread and wine that we may accept His gracious invitation without fear and with full confidence. Our Saviour had yet another reason for choosing the form of bread and wine, and it is the strongest reason of all; He wanted in this sacrament to give Himself to us as our food. Bread and wine form part of the ordinary nourishment of all men, great and small, high or lowly. Thanks be to Thee, divine Redeemer, for vouchsafing to remain with us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in such a way as to increase the merit of our faith, and, while dispelling our fears and increasing our confidence, to make the enjoyment of this heavenly food possible to us. Amen.

SERMON XV

On the Manner in which Jesus Christ is Present in the Blessed Sacrament

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

We learned last Sunday by what causes the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is brought about. These causes are, firstly, the change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ; further, it is the words spoken by Jesus Christ when He instituted this sacrament, and which are repeated by the priest in the Mass, that cause this change to take place; finally, these words derive their power from God, "to whom nothing is impossible."

We have also learned that Jesus Christ is present in this sacrament under the appearance of bread and wine.

As regards the nature of the divine presence, we have still three questions to ask:

I. How long does the real presence in the Blessed Sacrament last?

II. Is Christ whole and entire under each kind?

III. Is He entire and living in each part?

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will consider these three points briefly, but with the utmost devotion.

I

Christ remains present in the Blessed Sacrament with His sacred flesh and blood so long as

the species of bread and wine exist. It is clearly apparent that the form of bread and wine must be subject to the influences of time, the action of heat, cold, light, damp, dryness, etc.; that they may be changed, dissolved, diluted, mixed, or mingled with other substances, broken up, divided, and destroyed. Now, how long does the real presence of Jesus Christ remain in them? Is He present only so long as the sacred species are kept in the tabernacle, on the altar, or in the Church? No; Christ remains really present a much longer time than that. He is present so long as the bread and wine exist, so long as one can say of them that they are bread and wine. But when so great a change has taken place in the species that they are no longer recognizable as bread and wine, then they no longer contain the presence of Jesus Christ.

The reason of this is not far to seek. Every sacrament requires an outward sign, and that of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar consists of bread and wine. Therefore, when this form of matter no longer exists, the presence of Jesus Christ ceases also.

This furnishes us with a new motive for marveling at the depth of humiliation to which our Saviour has subjected Himself in this sacrament. He comes down from heaven at a slight word, almost a sign, from a man, a priest. What condescension! When King Assuerus commanded the presence of Vashti, his queen, before him and all the assembled great men of the kingdom, "she refused and would not come." And yet it was a mighty ruler that had summoned her, in

order that her radiant beauty might be seen and admired by all. Our Saviour becomes present at the words of consecration pronounced by the least of priests in the most insignificant of villages. What humility, what obedience! How long does He remain? As He becomes present in obedience to the priest, so He makes the duration of His presence depend on the laws of the inanimate creation, the lowest of His creatures. As soon as the form disappears His sacred presence ceases also. O humility without limit! The man in the Gospel was turned away from the wedding feast because he had not on a wedding garment; but our Saviour departs from us in the Blessed Sacrament as soon as the poor and humble cloak disappears under which He has seen fit to take shape.

II

The catechism asks: "Is Jesus Christ whole and entire both under the form of bread and under the form of wine?" And it answers: "Jesus Christ is whole and entire both under the form of bread and under the form of wine."

We have already explained several times that Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament under two quite different and separate forms, under the form of bread and under the form of wine. Under each of these forms He is present entire and undivided; entirely under the form of bread and entirely under the form of wine.

In order to understand this truth more clearly, we must endeavor to grasp how far the power of the words of consecration extends, what they

effect, and what they do not effect. First, they change the bread into the body of Christ; only the species remains. Do they also change the bread into the blood of Christ? No. Or into the soul of Christ, or into His divinity? No. Their power does not go further than to change the bread into His sacred body. In the same way the words of consecration change the wine into the blood of Christ and into nothing else. But, nevertheless, there exists under the appearance of bread not only the body of Christ, but also His blood, His soul, His divinity; the entire Christ. In the same way, under the form of wine, we have not only the precious blood, but the body and soul, and the entire divinity of Christ, in short, the whole Christ really present. But how can this be true when we have just said that the change effected by the words of consecration did not extend so far? It is because in Jesus Christ, as He now is, the body and blood, soul and divinity are indissolubly united; where one is they all must be. At the same moment, therefore, that the bread is changed into the body of Christ, His blood, His soul, His divinity become also present, and at the moment that the wine is changed into the blood of Christ it contains His body and soul and divinity also.

The sun gives us an example of this in the natural order of things. Wherever we have sun there is light and a certain degree of warmth; and the sun itself can not be separated from its own heat and light. Or, I can give you an illustration that is yet more simple and easy to understand. Imagine a chain made of four links, all so

strongly joined to each other that not all the power on earth could force them asunder. What is the result? The result is that wherever the first link is, the second, third, and fourth must follow; and wherever the second link is the first, the third, and the fourth must be, too. The body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ are the four links of a chain that can never be broken. As soon, therefore, as the bread is changed into the body of Christ, the entire person of Christ becomes present in it, and as soon as the wine is changed into the blood of Christ it contains the entire person of Christ.

Certainly, you say to me, that appears logical. But how do you account for the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Christ being so indissolubly united? At His crucifixion His precious blood streamed to the very last drop from His wounds, and when He died His soul left His sacred body. For this very reason St. Thomas Aquinas rightly teaches that if while our Saviour hung on the cross one of the apostles had pronounced the words of consecration over bread and wine, then under the appearance of bread, *only* the body, and under the appearance of wine, *only* the blood, of Christ would have been present. Ever since His resurrection the body of the Saviour has been glorified and is immortal, indivisible, invulnerable, and inseparable from His divine soul. "Christ rising again from the dead dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him." Joined to the sacred body, therefore, must always be His blood, His soul, and His divinity; and to the precious blood His

body, His soul, His divinity. Under each form He is wholly and entirely present with His flesh and blood, body and soul, His divinity and His humanity.

III

Now we shall have no difficulty in answering our third question: Is Christ entire and living in each separate part of the host? When the priest breaks the host, he breaks only the form, the appearances; Jesus Christ remains whole and living under each part. His sacred body, being immortal, can not be divided or wounded, and from this it follows that wherever the body of Christ is present it must be entire and living. Therefore, when, as happens in the Mass, the outward forms of the sacrament are divided and broken, Christ remains present in each part, in the smallest as well as the greatest, in the last as well as the first.

A familiar illustration often used to bring this truth home is that of a mirror. If you stand before a life-size mirror, you see your image reflected—how many times? Once. But if you break the mirror into a thousand pieces and then put them all together again, how often will you see yourself then? In every portion of the mirror separately; not that one piece will reflect your hand, another your arm, a third your head, and so on; you will see your whole self in each piece of looking-glass, because each fragment has now become a complete mirror. In the same way, when the outward sign of the Blessed Sacrament is divided, each portion becomes the outward sign,

and Jesus Christ is in each portion wholly and entirely present.

I found another and better illustration a few years ago in an old book. It is that of a great orator addressing a vast audience; his words, his sentences, his whole discourse is uttered only once, and yet all his listeners hear it. Every word, every sentence, the entire speech in its whole context reaches each one, although only a very minute portion of the particles of air set in vibration by the mouth of the speaker reaches the ear of each separately.

Christ, therefore, is present in the Blessed Sacrament as long as the form or appearances exist, and He is whole and entire under each form, and is present entire and living in every part or portion of the outward form. By His presence in the Blessed Sacrament Our Lord has given us a marvelous example of condescension and humility, and He also pays us the greatest possible honor and mark of favor. Is it not a great glory for us that the sacred humanity, while sitting at the right hand of the Father, should also be present on earth, and not in one place only, but in thousands and thousands of places at the same time—really and truly and actively present under the natural appearances of bread and wine? Countless knees bend before Him in this lowly form, countless lips praise Him, and countless hearts love Him. Truly in this sacrament there meet and go hand in hand God's power and His mercy, the divinity and humanity of Christ, His humiliation and His glory, the most pure devotion of which man is capable and the most hor-

rible blasphemy; the deepest faith and the most insolent unbelief.

Down in adoration falling,
  Lo! the Sacred Host we hail;
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing,
  Newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying
  Where the feeble senses fail. **Amen.**

SERMON XVI

On the Abasement and the Glory of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

JESUS CHRIST is really, truly, and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Two points still remain to be considered in connection with the doctrine of the real presence, namely:

I. The humiliations our Saviour suffers.

II. The glory He gains through His presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

I

By being present in the Blessed Sacrament in the way we have described, our Saviour subjects Himself to a profound humiliation. To understand this we have only to consider:

(a) Who it is that is present. The Son of God, Redeemer of the world, the future judge of all mankind, who in His glorified humanity is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, adored and praised continually by the saints and angels. In contrast to this exalted state, think of the depth of His abasement in the Blessed Sacrament! He descends from the pinnacle of heaven to this vale of tears; He leaves the hosts of the elect and dwells in churches made of wood and stone, in narrow, shabby, gloomy tabernacles, in order to be with miserable, sinful men. He con-

ceals the radiance of His glory, in which the angels take delight under the poor, inanimate, lifeless form of bread and wine, so that He may repose on the lips and in the hearts of His worthless creatures. What an immeasurable abyss of self-abasement!

Yet such humiliations as these are self-imposed, because He wills it; but there are others which He suffers at the hands of men; men who, in spite of His express word, refuse to believe in the real presence, or who treat Him irreverently and receive Him unworthily, or who even wish Him evil and try to do Him harm. Can humiliation go deeper than to descend to such depths from such a height?

(b) Consider the extent of His self-abasement. In point of time it is continual, lasting day and night, year in and year out, without intermission from the evening of the last supper to the present day, till the end of the world. Our Saviour subjects Himself to it, not in one place alone, but in every country, town, village, church or altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and administered; it is renewed as often as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated, as many times as there are hosts, and for every part and particle of each host.

This sacrament is called in truth the sacrament of humiliation. While on earth our Saviour said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart," and He repeats to each one of us from the Tabernacle, not in words, but by His example: "Learn of Me, for I am humble of heart." What a convincing sermon! Though a

silent one, it rings continually in our ears. Away with all proud and conceited thoughts! Look how willingly He has abased Himself to these depths. Away with all vain endeavors to adorn and beautify the body; glance at the bread and wine under which your God lies hidden. O dearly beloved brethren, where shall we find an abyss deep enough to hide us, for love of whom the Son of God becomes present under the form of bread and wine! We can never humble ourselves deeply enough, and for this very reason let us strive all the more zealously to give to Our Lord the honor and glory that is due to Him in this most Blessed Sacrament of His love.

II

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." If every one that humbles himself shall be exalted, what honor and glory is due to our Saviour, who has willingly humbled Himself so deeply in the Blessed Sacrament! We must try with all our strength to show Him all the honor and reverence in our power. This we can do in several ways:

(a) By being reverently silent when we are near Him in His house, kneeling in His sacred presence before His altar, His tabernacle. At such times let our lips open only to praise and thank Him.

(b) We can honor Him by outward signs: By reverently uncovering our head as soon as we enter a church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved; by humbly bending the knee in going in and out of the house of God, in passing before

the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, and before and after holy communion. It is very desirable to genuflect as devoutly, as reverently, as humbly as possible, making this act an expression of faith, of gratitude, of adoration. My God and my Saviour, can we think the floor of the church too low for us, when Thou hast stooped to the form of bread and wine?

(c) We can honor Him by our words, both sung and spoken. Oh, if we could but command the thoughts and the expressions of St. Thomas Aquinas, who has glorified the Blessed Sacrament in hymns and canticles that are known all the world over, and translated into every language, and which are worthy to be sung by the angels themselves! Let us at least follow with devotion the prayers and hymns of the Church in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, and above all let us resolve never to pronounce the name of this most holy sacrament irreverently, or to put it to profane uses.

We can honor our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament by our actions; by visiting Him in the Blessed Sacrament, by joining in the Corpus Christi processions. We have plenty of opportunities for showing Him reverence if we like to avail ourselves of them. Inns, public houses, and such places are often overflowing with people till late at night; but how poorly attended are the evening services of the Church! My Saviour and my Redeemer, what a contrast! How disgraceful! We might well find a little leisure to spend with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament from time to time. If the Blessed Sacrament were re-

served only in one spot in the whole world, pilgrimages without number would be organized to visit that place—people would stream to it. How great would be the joy and devotion of those who were fortunate enough to get so near to Our Lord! They would want to stay near Him always, and would be very sad and sorrowful at having to leave Him again. Yet here our Saviour is present in our midst; close to each one of us, within reach of all; the door of His house stands open to receive His creatures, who are free to enter when they will and remain as long as they please. They may address Him in any language, and ask for whatever they want. No one is ever felt to come too early or too late, or to be too insistent, and there is no danger of outstaying the welcome that awaits each one. What thousands and thousands go daily past His door and how few think of entering! It is too much trouble to take a few steps, to spend a few moments in greeting Him, in thanking Him, in acknowledging His goodness in so abasing Himself in order to remain among us. We travel miles to see our friends; we sit for hours in the theater; we spend half the night in taverns; we often waste the whole night in dancing, but a few moments is too long to spend in the presence of Our Lord! Is this giving Him the honor that is due to Him? No, it is treating Him with indifference, with ingratitude, with coldness! Moreover, we are neglecting our own best interests.

Our Saviour brings with Him all the rich treasure of His grace—graces so numerous that they can not be counted, so great that they can not

be measured; and He distributes these graces freely and generously to those who love to visit Him often and with devotion. "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Have we no need of grace, of comfort in our sorrows, of help in our temptations, of enlightenment in our doubts, of strength in our weakness? Are there no others beside ourselves for whom we want to pray? Oh, look at Him! He who is richer than the whole world, and who loves us more than all the world, is in our midst. Oh, we are blind indeed not to visit Him often and give Him our whole heart in this great sacrament of His love.

By acting in this way we should be honoring Our Lord and entering into the designs of almighty God; for God Himself honors the sacred humanity of our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament in a very special way. How does He do this? A human body, as we know, is naturally limited to being present in one place at a time; the same is true of the human soul. God alone is present everywhere; in the whole world, and in every part of it; it is one of the divine attributes to be omnipresent. But by the power of God the sacred humanity of Christ, though not omnipresent, is present in many places at the same time. In one sense this is a humiliation; in another sense it is a source of glory, for it enables the sacred humanity of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to receive reverence, praise, and adoration in many places simultaneously. Let us by visiting Him, by showing Him deep love and reverence, and by receiving Him in holy

communion often and devoutly, do our little part to increase the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed and praised without end be the most holy and most divine Sacrament. Amen.

SERMON XVII

On the Nature and Origin of Sacrifice

"Christ offered Himself unspotted unto God" (*Heb.* ix. 11-12).

The opening words of our instructions on the Blessed Sacrament explained that Jesus Christ had a three-fold end in view in instituting it. First, He wanted to be our companion on this miserable earth, this vale of tears; to be this it was necessary for Him to be really present among us. We have closely examined the doctrine of the real presence, its truth, its causes, its nature, as well as all its effects for us.

Our Saviour wanted also to leave us in this sacrament a gift worthy to be offered to God Almighty. This offering is made in the Mass. It is, therefore, now our duty to consider this Holy Sacrifice, and we will do so briefly, but at the same time as completely as possible. The Catechism of the Council of Trent enjoins upon parish priests the duty of carefully instructing the faithful about the Mass. If this duty is laid upon priests, then the faithful, on their side, can not be excused from the obligation of listening with attention and devotion to the teaching offered them, assimilating it to the best of their ability. We are commanded by the Church to hear Mass on all Sundays and holy-days of obligation; it therefore concerns us very nearly to understand, as far as we are capable of grasping it, all that

relates to these sacred mysteries. The more we know of the value, the nature, the ends, and the ceremonies of the Mass, the more willing we shall be to assist at it, and the greater spiritual benefit and profit we shall derive from it. To-day we will confine ourselves to two points, considering devoutly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. The nature of sacrifice.
II. The origin of sacrifice.

I

The catechism furnishes us with a short and clear definition of the nature of a sacrifice. In answer to the question, "What is a sacrifice?" it answers: "A sacrifice is the offering of an object by a priest to God alone, and the consuming of it to acknowledge that He is the creator and Lord of all things." If we think over this definition we shall see that three things—no more and no less—are necessary to constitute a sacrifice, and that in them is contained the whole essence of a sacrifice. First, a gift, or rather a visible, tangible offering is necessary. Secondly, this offering is to be given to no human being nor to any creature; it must be presented to God alone. Thirdly, it must be offered to God to acknowledge Him as supreme Lord over us and the whole world. Therefore, we must have, first, a tangible, visible gift; second, it must be given to God alone; third, it must be given to Him in acknowledgment of His supremacy over us. These three points are simple and easy to understand, but they form the whole foundation of everything we have to teach you concerning the Mass, and we

shall refer to them again and again in the course of our instructions.

Although the definitions we have given are very clear and simple, yet they have frequently been objected to, and before going any further I should like to dispose of these objections.

For a sacrifice, you say, a visible, tangible offering made to God is necessary! Well, we can understand that one man can give another a present; but can a man give anything to God, the supreme and only Lord and possessor of all things? It seems an impossibility. One can not give as a present what already belongs to Him. God, the Lord, says Himself in the Twenty-third Psalm: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," and again, "All the beasts of the woods are Mine; the cattle on the hill, and the oxen." How, then, can we give Him His own property? The solution of this difficulty is very simple; although God is and always will be undoubtedly supreme Lord and Master of all things, yet He has endowed man with independent possessions of his own and given him rights over them. He said to our first parents: "Rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth," and the Psalmist says: "The heaven of heavens is the Lord's; but the earth He hath given to the children of men." Therefore, as man has certain limited but real rights over the external things of the earth, he is entitled to make a present of them to God, just as children will buy a gift for their parents out of pennies saved

from the pocket-money they themselves have given them.

Very well, you admit, what you say sounds reasonable. But, in order to give a present, not only must one have some real and tangible object to give, there must also be a person to accept and retain it; it must pass from the hand of the giver into that of him to whom it is given. Now what use can God, who possesses all the goods and delights of eternity, have for the gifts of men? He Himself asks: "Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats?" It is certainly out of our power to give to God anything that He wants, or has need of, or by means of which He will be enriched, His happiness increased, or His perfections added to. This we must clearly remember. But it is obvious that any one who wishes to give a present to another person will at least not keep it himself; for this reason it was always looked upon as a necessary part of a sacrifice that the offering should be left in the Temple, to be burned, destroyed, consumed upon the altar. When Aaron, who was the first high priest under the Old Law, offered sacrifice for the first time, fire fell from heaven and consumed the victim, and this fire had to be henceforward kept burning continually. When the holy man Elias wanted to prove to the false prophets of Baal the truth of the real God he bade them erect an altar on Mount Carmel, and killing a bullock to lay it on the altar. He, on his side, did in like manner, and in addition he dug a trench round his altar and, filling it with water, he sprinkled not only the altar, but the wood and the

victim. Then said Elias, "Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord, and the God that shall answer by fire, let Him be God." And the priests of Baal cried and called on their gods in vain; then Elias prayed and fire fell from heaven and consumed the holocaust, and the wood, and the stones, and even the water in the trench, showing clearly that God had accepted the sacrifice.

Two things result from the explanations we have given you on the nature of sacrifice. If a sacrifice consists of a real present offered to God, it follows that the worth and value of the sacrifice depends to a great extent on the value and worth of the thing sacrificed, and on the need and desire felt for it, both by him who offers it and him who accepts it.

On one occasion in a war against the Philistines, David, standing in front of the enemy's camp, cried out, tormented with thirst: "O that some man would get me a drink of the water out of the cistern that is in Bethlehem by the gate." At once three valiant men broke through the camp of the Philistines, obtained the water, and brought it to the king. But he refused to drink it and poured it on the earth as a sacrifice to the Lord. It was an offering of great price. Why? Because it was bought by the sweat and blood and almost the lives of three heroes, and David longed for it exceedingly; it was the only water within his reach.

Finally, a sacrifice being "the offering of an object and the consuming of it to show that God is the creator and Lord of all things," it follows

that a sacrifice can necessarily be offered to Him alone.

II

The nature of a sacrifice corresponds with its origin. There have been sacrifices since the beginning of the world, and under the Old Law they were strictly prescribed by God Himself. If we review the by-gone centuries, dearly beloved brethren, we shall find that in all countries all races and peoples were accustomed to offer their gifts to God. The remains of pagan altars and temples and the records of pagan historians prove that it was so among the pagan nations. We know from Holy Scripture that the Jews had bloody and unbloody sacrifices for their priests; sacrifices for the people, for particular individuals, for special feasts and occasions, and for certain sins; and he would, indeed, be ignorant of the Old Testament who was not aware that these numerous sacrifices were ordained by God Himself. But let us get to the very root of things and go back to Abraham, the Father of the Jewish people. Look at him on the mountain, as he stands with uplifted arm, the knife in his hand. In front of him is the holocaust, his only son, the child of promise and of his old age. What is he going to do? Go back to the days of Noe, who on alighting from the ark at once offered a sacrifice to God on the ruins of a submerged world. If we search further and further back into the past, we see at the earliest dawn of history two brothers, Cain and Abel, offering sacrifice to God. The one offered the firstlings of his flock, the other the

fruits of the earth. Where did they learn to offer sacrifice to God? It must have been their parents who taught them. If this is so, surely we have good grounds for thinking that it was God Himself who instructed Adam and Eve; once we admit that Adam and Eve offered sacrifices, then we may say in truth that sacrifice is as old as history, as old as mankind and religion, and as old as the world itself. From Abel's sacrifice of an innocent lamb to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, we have a long, unbroken chain of sacrifice. The sacrifice of Golgotha was the most sublime of all sacrifices; it was the offering of a gift so rare—the life's blood of the Son of God—that it can never be surpassed. It was offered by a priest spotlessly pure, with an intention holy beyond conception, and a complete abandonment that kept nothing back, on an altar open to the face of heaven and earth. It was a sacrifice so efficacious that its effects penetrate the future and reach back into the past, and will last for all time. It destroyed the sacrifices of the Old Law, which disappeared before it like shadows before the sun; for the sacrifices of the Old Law were but the shadow of what was to come; signs pointing to the cross. The goal once reached, the need for signs is over. Amen.

SERMON XVIII

On the Sacrifice of the Cross

"But Christ . . . an high priest of the good things to come . . . neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own blood entered once into the Holies" (*Heb.* ix. 11-12).

IN OUR last instruction we considered the nature and the origin of sacrifice. A sacrifice consists of three parts: (1) A visible gift, (2) offered to God, (3) with the intention of acknowledging and glorifying Him as supreme Lord of all things.

History proves that sacrifice has been offered at all times since the very beginning of the world, and that those of the Jewish law were prescribed by God Himself.

The sacrifices of the Old Law being but types and figures of the perfect sacrifice of the New Law, which was to come, did not last longer than the Old Law itself. What, then, is the sacrifice of the New Law? It is, in a word, the sacrifice of the cross; therefore, we are concerned to show you that the sacrifice of the cross was a real sacrifice, one in which those of the Old Law found their fulfillment and completion.

For this purpose I propose that we should together endeavor, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to answer the four following questions:

I. Was the sacrifice of the New Law offered on an altar?

II. Who was the priest?
III. What gift did he offer?
IV. To whom, and with what intention, did he offer it?

I

The cross on which the Saviour hung was the altar of the bloody sacrifice of the New Testament. Erected on the summit of Mount Calvary, its foundations were rooted in the earth, while with arms extended over the whole wide world it stretched upward toward heaven. We are not told the place where Cain and Abel offered their sacrifice, but it was probably on a mountain-top. Noe, we know, sacrificed to God after the flood on the first mountain on which the ark rested, and God Himself commanded Abraham, saying: "Take thy only-begotten son, Isaac, . . . and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." By this we see that a mountain was the site chosen by God for the altar on which to offer this special sacrifice decreed by Him. Now Isaac was but a type; it was fitting therefore that the sacrifice by which all types and figures were to be completed and fulfilled should be offered also on a mountain height. Josue, who prefigured Christ by his name, and even more by his deeds, sacrificed to God on Mount Ebal; Elias vindicated the true God on Mount Carmel; in fact, one may say without exaggeration that the scene of the sacrifices of the Old Law was almost in every case a mountain. The Temple itself, where men went most usually to offer sacrifice, was built on a

mountain which was in fact one summit of that range of hills which included Mount Calvary. How appropriate it is that, as the sacrifices of the Old Law, which were but types and figures, were celebrated on mountain summits, that of the New Law, their completion and fulfillment, should have taken place on the heights of Calvary!

II

Who was the priest at the sacrifice of Calvary? A priest is necessary for every sacrifice; by whom was that of the cross celebrated? Did the Jewish priests offer it? It was certainly they who condemned Christ to death, but the thought of making an offering to God was far removed from them. Did Pilate or the executioners officiate? Such a foolish supposition has never crossed the mind of any reasonable being. No; the priest of the sacrifice of the cross was no other than Jesus Christ Himself. Shall I prove it? First, our Saviour possessed all the necessary qualities and virtues of a priest. St. Paul says: "It was fitting we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens." If among all the inhabitants of the earth a high-priest had to be selected to offer the sacrifice of the New Law, to whom would every one look, both in heaven and on earth? Surely to Him who in His own person, and by virtue of His holy life, stands next to God. Who is purer, more spotless, further removed from every stain of sin than He? Who stands nearer to God—He is Himself God—the only-begotten Son of the Father. If heaven and earth

were to unite in seeking a priest for the sacrifice of the New Law, they could find none better than Jesus Christ Our Lord.

But for a priest to be chosen by men is of no moment; to be called by God is what matters: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself but he that is called by God as Aaron was." Jesus was destined by God for this office from all eternity. "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." When was He ordained and consecrated priest and high-priest? When, in order to redeem mankind, He took to Himself the nature of man. His sacred humanity was divinely appointed, consecrated, and anointed for the priesthood, and for this reason He is called "Christ," which means anointed. How could He have ordained priests unless He Himself had been first ordained? Jesus Christ is high-priest of the New Testament, and in offering His sacrifice is distinguished by all the characteristics which marked out the priests of the Old Law. The priests of the Old Law when offering sacrifice wore specially prescribed garments different from those for every-day use. The breast was covered with a shield ornamented with twelve different precious stones set in four rows, and each stone had engraved upon it the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Now look at our high priest Jesus Christ at the altar of the cross. He, too, has laid aside His usual garments and is clothed in the purple of His own blood. He is adorned with four precious stones, namely, His four most terrible wounds, in which are engraved the names of His elect: "Beloved, I have graven

thee on My hands." He wears on His head a crown of an unusual character—a crown of thorns. O my Saviour, who could contemplate Thy sufferings and doubt that Thou Thyself art the high priest who offered the great sacrifice on the altar of the cross!

III

But what victim did Christ offer in the sacrifice of the cross? He offered Himself: His precious blood which streamed down in torrents, His sacred body fastened to the cross, His blessed soul which He resigned into the hands of His Father: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." His life was not taken from Him; He offered it a voluntary sacrifice.

The bloody sacrifices of the Old Law were types and figures of the bloody sacrifice of the cross, and found in it their fulfillment. The victims used in these ancient sacrifices were required to be perfect in three ways: They had to be of the right age, neither too old nor too young; without a flaw; and the "firstlings of the flock." "Sanctify unto Me every first-born, for they are Mine." Now, see if Christ is not the perfect victim. He offered Himself in the thirty-third year of His life, an age as far removed from the weakness of childhood as from the feebleness of old age, the very bloom of manhood. It is hard to find words to describe the perfections of such a victim. His sacred body was the offspring of the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was beyond all comparison more blessed and richer in

grace than any other creature. He was not only the first-born and only son of Mary; He was also the first and only-begotten Son of God the Father, first-born of both heaven and earth. In the whole of heaven and earth nowhere could a victim be found more perfect and more fitted to be offered to God than that one offered by Jesus Christ on the cross.

The way in which the victims of these bloody sacrifices were prepared for sacrifice was specially ordained. First, they were killed and their blood pressed out; then the flesh was cut off the bones and laid on the altar to be consumed. Moreover, it was prescribed that the priest should dip his finger in the blood of the victim, and with it touch the "horns" of the altar, next pouring the blood out upon the ground at the foot of the altar. The divine high-priest on the cross faithfully fulfilled all these conditions. The victim of the sacrifice there consummated was prepared by the hand of God when in the Garden of Olives, pressed down by the load of the sins of the whole world, He suffered His agony and sweat of blood. It was prepared by the hands of men when His sacred flesh was flayed by the cruel scourging before He was laid on the altar. The sacred hands and fingers of the divine high priest were dipped in the blood of the lamb and the four horns of the altar, the arms of the cross sprinkled with it, while it also poured down in torrents from His wounds, upon the sinful earth beneath. The fire which consumed the victim was not material fire; it was the fire of love celestial and divine, like those flames which fell from heaven to con-

sume the first sacrifice offered in the Temple, or that which descended on Mount Carmel upon the sacrifice of Elias. O Jesus, Thy cross is an altar; Thou Thyself art the High Priest; Thy life is the victim, the bleeding, perfect victim, which is consumed in sacrifice by the fire of Thy love.

There is no need to prove to you that Jesus Christ offered His sacrifice with the intention of glorifying God. His own words are: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me." So completely were His every thought, word, and deed centered in the Father that to do His will was the support and vital force of His life, and if this was true of all His daily actions how much more true must it be of His last and most sublime action; His sacrifice on the cross: "He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross." "He offered Himself unspotted unto God." How great, how efficacious a sacrifice! At its completion the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, signifying that the door of heaven, so long closed against us, stood once more open to receive mankind. O Jesus Christ, High Priest of the New Testament, Thy cross is the most exalted altar on earth, Thy sacrifice the most perfect, reconciling as it does heaven and earth. May it be for us the portal of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XIX

On the Types and Prophecies by which the Sacrifice of the Mass was Foreshadowed

"But Melchisedech, the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God" (*Gen.* xiv. 18).

WE HAVE fully considered the nature and the origin of sacrifice. We have seen that it consists of three parts: (1) An outward and visible gift; (2) that this gift must be given or offered to God; (3) that it must be offered with the intention of acknowledging His supremacy—in a word, to adore Him.

As regards the origin of sacrifice, we saw that it dates back to the pagan and Jewish times, and that the sacrifices of the Old Law and all the details relating to them were ordained and prescribed by God Himself, coming to an end only when the great sacrifice of the cross was completed. They were, in fact, figures of the great sacrifice to come, and were without purpose as soon as the sacrifice of the cross was consummated.

We have considered, also, how complete and perfect a sacrifice our Saviour offered, and seen that it can never be excelled or equalled. Nevertheless, God was to be glorified in the New Law as He had been since the beginning of the world —by sacrifice. A sacrifice is necessary to a church, a religion; and Christ's offering, being

one that can never be surpassed, it is evident that the sacrifice of the New Law must consist in the unbloody renewal of this great sacrifice. The sacrifices of the Old Law pointed to the future; they were but reflections of what was to come. The sacrifice of the New Law reaches back to the past. It is the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross.

The sacrifice of the cross was foretold in the Old Law by figures and prophecies, and we will make these two points the subject of our instruction to-day, considering:

I. The figures.

II. The prophecies relating to the Mass in the Old Testament.

I

Among the types and figures of the Mass to be found in the Old Testament, the first is the sacrifice of Melchisedech. Let us briefly review the circumstances of his sacrifice. He was a contemporary of the patriarch Abraham, who at the time of which we are speaking dwelt in the vale of Mambre in the land of Canaan. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, lived in Sodom, which was then still in existence. It happened that five pagan kings joined together to fight the kings of Sodom and Gomorrha, with whom two other of the neighboring kings united—as Holy Scripture says, "four kings against five." The four kings were defeated; the enemy plundered the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha and among other prisoners they carried off Abraham's nephew Lot and his family and all his goods. Abraham, hearing

this, called out 318 of his men-at-arms and pursued the robbers, and was successful in recapturing their prisoners and their plunder, including his nephew and all his possessions. On the homeward journey he passed through the town of Salem, later the city of Jerusalem, and Holy Scripture relates: "Melchisedech, King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God, blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abraham by the most high God, by whose protection thy enemies are in thy hands.' And he gave him tithes of all."

This is the account given in Holy Scripture. Does the sacrifice of Melchisedech appear to be a figure of the sacrifice of the Mass? What are the points of resemblance? First, consider the name. The very name "Melchisedech," which signifies "just king" or "king of justice," relates to Christ who was, indeed, the most just king, king of all justice. The word "Salem" means peace, therefore Melchisedech was "king of peace," and to whom would this sublime title belong if not to Him who has made peace between heaven and earth, between God and man. Melchisedech was not only king; he was high priest, king, and priest; Jesus Christ equally was king of the universe and high priest of the New Covenant. St. Paul proves on various grounds the dignity of Melchisedech and his likeness to Christ, dwelling especially on the incident of the blessing of Abraham. Now he who blesses another is invariably higher than the one to whom he gives his blessing; this, therefore, would go to establish that Melchisedech was above even Abraham, the great

patriarch, who was the founder of the Jewish people, who inherited all the great promises of the Most High.

But do not let us lose sight of the main point. What was the gift offered by Melchisedech? He offered bread and wine. Is the sacrifice of the Mass, in which Christ offers Himself under the appearance of bread and wine, not here clearly and distinctly indicated? Heresy has asserted that Melchisedech did not sacrifice the bread and wine at all, that he merely offered it as refreshment to Abraham and his companions, who were tired and exhausted after their long march. But why should Holy Scripture tell us he was priest of the most high God except as an explanation of his offering sacrifice? Why would Abraham have given tithes of all he had taken unless in recognition of Melchisedech's having officiated as priest? And why, in the sublime psalm when God the Father is represented as speaking to the son, do we read: "Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech." This means you will forever offer sacrifice as Melchisedech offered it. The Doctors and teachers of the Church, who look upon Melchisedech and his sacrifice as a type and figure of the unbloody sacrifice of Christ, are too numerous to be even enumerated here; they include all the greatest minds, without exception. We will confine ourselves to one very old and reliable witness, namely, the Missal. In saying Mass the priest prays after the consecration that God may vouchsafe graciously to look upon and accept his sacrifice as He accepted the gifts of Abel, of Abra-

ham, of Melchisedech, who offered Him a pure sacrifice, an immaculate host.

Melchisedech, by his name and title, and in his own person, as well as by the unbloody sacrifice he offered, is without doubt a type and figure of Christ and the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. To question it would be contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture and of the Fathers of the Church; and in direct opposition to the prayers of the Mass contained in the Missal.

II

We have to consider, in the second place, the prophecy contained in the Old Testament, by which the unbloody sacrifice of the New Testament is clearly foretold. It occurs in the writings of the prophet Malachias, and is as follows: "I have no pleasure in you (meaning the Jews), saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." "Saith the Lord of hosts"—these are the words of God. They are addressed directly to the Jews of the Old Testament, and they express two things: First, that the Jewish sacrifices, which were so numerous and so various in their character, would one day cease altogether; and, secondly, they would cease altogether because a new sacrifice to the glory of God would take their place. It is the sacrifice of the Mass, not the death of our Saviour on Mount Calvary, that is foreshadowed by the words of the proph-

ecy. How can we tell this? Because the marks of this sacrifice described by the words of the prophet are found, all three, not in the sacrifice on Mount Calvary, but in the sacrifice of the Mass. I will enumerate them briefly, and you can judge for yourselves: First, a sacrifice is described which will be celebrated everywhere, "from the rising of the sun even to the going down." This does not apply to the sacrifice of the cross, which was offered but once on Mount Calvary, whereas the sacrifice of the Mass, as every child knows, takes place all the world over. The second mark is, that the new sacrifice will be offered among the Gentiles, the word Gentiles being used to designate all peoples who were not Jews. Now the sacrifice of the cross was offered in the Jewish capital, in the very heart of the Jewish nation, but the Mass is celebrated in the midst of the Gentiles. This mark, therefore, though not applicable to the sacrifice of the cross, is fully so to the sacrifice of the Mass. The third mark of the new sacrifice is, that it is a clean oblation. The expression "a clean oblation" is held to designate an unbloody sacrifice, and here again we find that, while this is not true of the sacrifice of the cross, it does clearly apply to the sacrifice of the Mass. The new sacrifice, which, according to the word of God, was to replace the Jewish sacrifice, was to be celebrated everywhere among all people and would be a clean oblation. Not one of these three marks is found in the sacrifice of the cross, but one and all are to be found in the sacrifice of the Mass.

How great and holy a thing must the Mass be,

dearly beloved brethren, to have been foreshadowed and prefigured in the Old Testament so clearly and so long beforehand by the sacrifice of Melchisedech. Made known by God Himself, praised and exalted by His lips, the sacrifices of the Jewish Law vanish before it like stars in the full light of the sun. We have, indeed, good right to rejoice that we enjoy the substance, of which the old covenant saw but the shadow; that we actually possess this great sacrifice which, under the Old Law, was only promised. Let us rejoice and thank God. Let us show our gratitude by being eager to learn all we can about the Holy Sacrifice, and by our zeal in assisting at it with reverence and devotion. Thus, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, now and for all time, God's name will be glorified. Amen.

SERMON XX

On the Institution of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

THE great and bloody sacrifice of the New Testament offered by Jesus Christ on the cross can never be excelled; but it can be renewed in an unbloody manner. We find, in the sacrifice of Melchisedech, a figure of this unbloody renewal, which was further foretold by the prophet Malachias. Both the figure and the prophecy have been fulfilled in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which is "the unbloody sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ."

The catechism tells us that, "Christ gave His priests power to change bread and wine into His body and blood when He said to the apostles, *'Do this in commemoration of Me.'* " By these words He instituted the holy sacrifice of the Mass. In order that we may fully take to heart the truth of this, let us to-day, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, consider the three following points:

I. What preceded.
II. What accompanied.
III. What followed these words of our Saviour.

I

The words, "Do this for a commemoration of Me," contain no mention whatever of the sacrifice of the Mass. How, then, can we assert that

they were used by our Saviour to institute it? That this is so becomes very apparent in the light of what preceded them. "Do this for a commemoration of Me." What does that mean? It means that what the Saviour had done they were to do. What had the Saviour done? First, He had taken bread and wine in His sacred hands; well, then, the apostles were to do the same—but that can not be called offering a sacrifice. Next, He changed the bread and wine into His sacred body and blood, saying, "This is My body, this is My blood." No doubt the apostles received power to consecrate, but still this does not constitute a sacrifice. Then our Saviour gave His sacred body and blood to the apostles to be their food and drink: "Take ye and eat; drink ye all of this"; clearly the apostles were enjoined to administer this sacrament to the faithful, but any indications that our Saviour instituted a sacrifice are still entirely lacking. Where do we find evidences of them.

Our Saviour had done something more. Before He spoke the words, "Do this for a commemoration of Me," He had offered His sacred body and blood under the form of bread and wine to the Father. "Take ye and eat," He said; "this is My body," and He added, "which is given for you." When did this offering of the body of Christ take place? Well, you point to the cross and say our Saviour was alluding to His crucifixion; His body was indeed given for us on Mount Calvary, but here He is speaking of an actual present offering, which had already taken place when He spoke the words, "This is My

body which is given for you." When was the body of Christ given for us? It was given at the last supper.

Our Lord offered His body in sacrifice for us at the last supper. The argument that His words, "which is offered for you," related to the giving of Himself as food to His disciples is a fallacious one; our Saviour had already stated that He was to be their food—"Take ye and eat" —and there is no reason why He should repeat this in the same sentence. Moreover, the words were, "which is given *for* you," and not, "which is given *to* you." A man may truly say, when he has paid the debts incurred by his son: "There is money that I have paid *for* you," and our Saviour's words, "this is My body, which is offered *for* you," clearly had reference, not to the gift of His body to His disciples as their food, but to the gift He had made of it to God.

See how far this takes us. Our Saviour speaks of the offering He had made of His sacred body under the form of bread. By these words He is not referring to the sacrifice of the cross, nor to the gift He had made of His body to be the food of His apostles. What offering, then, does He mean? He clearly means the offering He had made to His heavenly Father. It is as though He said: "This is My body, which I now offer to my heavenly Father for you." It was a sacrifice; not one of the three necessary parts are wanting: the visible gift, the body of Christ under the form of bread and wine; the offering of the gift to God—no one can doubt that our Saviour offered His body to God—thereby celebrating at

the last supper an unbloody sacrifice. It was only when it was completed that He added: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." Therefore, the mission laid on the apostles was to offer to God the body of Christ under the form of bread, as He Himself had done.

But more, still, had preceded the words, "Do this for a commemoration of Me." Our Saviour had taken the chalice containing the wine in His sacred hands and given it to His disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood." This gives us the changing of the wine, and the offering it to the disciples to drink. But where is the sacrifice? Here we find our divine Saviour added something; he said: "For this is My blood of the New Testament." This is of the utmost importance. In designating His precious blood as the blood of the New Testament our Saviour compares it, and speaks of it, in contrast to the blood of the Old Testament. Was there such a thing as the blood of the Old Testament? Certainly there was. The Book of Exodus relates that Moses recorded the law of God in a book. Then he erected twelve altars, and sent twelve young men of the people of Israel to offer sacrifice, and the blood of the victims was collected in twelve bowls. The blood out of six of the bowls was poured over the altar, while the remaining six were set upon it. Notice carefully that this was a bloody sacrifice, and it was the blood of the victims that was placed upon the altar. Then Moses "took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said: 'All things that the Lord hath

spoken we will do; we will be obedient.'" The covenant of the Old Law between God and the people was then made, Moses taking the blood which was on the altar and sprinkling it over the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant." Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, as Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant; Moses made known the Old Law, Jesus revealed the New Law; Moses sealed the Old Covenant with the blood of the victims; Jesus, Himself the victim, sealed the New Covenant with His own precious blood. Are we, then, not justified in saying that at the last supper Christ offered His blood to God under the form of wine, calling it the blood of the New Covenant? The blood of the Old Covenant was the blood of a victim, and the blood of the New Covenant must be so also. What meaning do the words, "Do this in commemoration of Me," addressed to the apostles, now bear? They mean: "I have offered my flesh and blood under the form of bread and wine to My heavenly Father. I want you to do the same." They contain the institution of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

II

Now let us consider the attendant circumstances under which these words were spoken. It is plainly stated in Holy Scripture that Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament under two forms, namely, bread and wine. One may very well wonder why two forms were used when, Christ being fully present under each, one alone would have been sufficient. In communicating under

one form Christ is received quite as fully as though He were received under both forms; and it would seem an easier thing to procure bread alone, or wine alone, than the two together. Then why the two forms? There must be a reason. It is not far to seek. Both forms, though not necessary to the sacrament, are necessary to the sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Mass is meant to be the continual renewal, the unbloody representation of the sacrifice of the cross; therefore, the Mass must put before us in some way what took place on the cross. Now, on the cross, Christ offered Himself by dying; and His death was the result of the separation of His precious blood from His sacred body. His loss of blood was the immediate cause of His death; to represent the death of Christ this separation of body and blood must be reproduced. Now, since the resurrection the sacred humanity has been glorified, so that the body and blood of Christ are no longer capable of being separated. Therefore, in order to represent the separation the two forms are necessary—two different forms, the one solid, the other fluid—typifying the separation of the body and blood of Christ on the cross and renewing and representing the sacrifice of Calvary in an unbloody manner. An artist who received a commission to paint a picture of the death of Abel, for instance, would not be giving an adequate representation of it were he to make it consist of one single figure. No; Cain with uplifted arm brandishing his club, and Abel sinking wounded to the ground must both have a place in it. So it may be looked upon as certain and true that

Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament not only as a sacrament, but also as a sacrifice.

III

Now let us turn to what followed upon our Saviour's words: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." How did the apostles, how does the Church, interpret this saying? They understood it as a mission, a command empowering them to offer the body and blood of Christ as a sacrifice to God the Father. St. Paul said: "We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." It is the Jews who served the tabernacle and we Christians who have the altar. To what end is an altar without a sacrifice? We have a sacrifice which is at the same time a food. "We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." What sacrifice, what food can that be? It can be no other than the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, our food and our sacrifice, the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

To proceed, if I am to quote witnesses, to bear testimony to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, I appeal to all the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church who have taught and preached and written concerning it at any time; to all the altars on which it has been celebrated; to all the missals and prayer-books which have ever been written and printed and made use of in connection with it; to the priests who have offered it, the faithful who have assisted at it; even to those heretics who, while cutting themselves off from the Catholic Church, still cling to the holy sacri-

fice of the Mass. What a multitude of evidence, all pointing to one sublime fact, namely, that the Mass is a sacrifice in which Jesus Christ offers Himself, His sacred body and His precious blood, to God for His honor and glory.

Let us unite ourselves to this host of witnesses so worthy of credence, and confess our firm and steadfast faith in this Blessed Sacrament, left us as a precious gift by our Lord and Saviour. Is it not fitting that we should offer to God in sacrifice the best and purest and holiest of all that we possess; and we have nothing holier, purer, or more precious than the body and blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine; therefore, we must offer these gifts to God. If even such as we have these feelings and desires, shall we be surprised that they are also those of our divine Saviour, the divine wisdom. What did He do when He took into His sacred hands His flesh and blood under the appearance of bread and wine? He offered these gifts to His heavenly Father and commissioned His apostles to do the same. "Do this for a commemoration of Me." Amen.

SERMON XXI

On the Dignity of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

Last Sunday we considered Jesus Christ in the room at Jerusalem with His apostles offering to His divine Father His flesh under the form of bread, and His blood under the form of wine, and charging His apostles to do the same after Him: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." This it is that is actually done in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The catechism asks: "What is the Mass?" And it answers: "The Mass is the unbloody sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ." In connection with this answer two thoughts occur to us concerning the Mass:

I. The thought of the dignity and the sublimity of the Holy Sacrifice.

II. That of our obligations in regard to it.

I

I can not help you to realize the greatness, the dignity, and the sublimity of the holy sacrifice of the Mass better than by saying in the words of the catechism: "The Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross." This is no mere figure of speech; it is the simple truth. We have already repeated again and again that a sacrifice must be a visible gift; the gift offered on the cross was the bleeding, bruised, and crucified body of Christ, His precious blood pouring in tor-

rents from His sacred wounds, His life, His soul: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Christ Himself was the visible gift. Now, compare this sacrifice to that offered in the Mass. What gift is offered to God Almighty in the Mass? It is an offering neither greater nor smaller than that of the cross, for it is the offering of the body and blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine—Christ Himself, whole and entire. The very same gift as that offered on Mount Calvary.

The second condition of a sacrifice is that "it must be offered by a priest to God alone." Who celebrated the sacrifice of the cross? We have already seen that it was Jesus Christ, the holy, innocent, and undefiled high priest of the New Testament, who was "separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens." He it was who officiated as priest at the sacrifice of the cross. But who is the celebrant at the sacrifice of the Mass? Oh, do not let your thoughts dwell on the poor man whom you see ascending the altar steps, for what he does is not done in His own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ. The white alb which he wears and the cross on the chasuble proclaim him the representative of that holy and undefiled high priest who offered and completed His sacrifice nailed to the tree of the cross. At the consecration he speaks the sacred words as though it was Jesus Christ Himself who was pronouncing them; and it is in truth Jesus Christ himself who offers the Holy Mass, though making use of the hands, the tongue, the words, the person of the priest. Therefore, in the holy sac-

rifice of the Mass we have the same priest and the same victim as in the sacrifice of the cross.

After these considerations we no longer need proof to convince us that the sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God alone, to acknowledge Him as Creator and Lord of all things, just as Christ offered His sacrifice on the cross to His heavenly Father with this intention.

Therefore, in the words of the catechism: "The Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, because the offering and the priest are the same, Christ, our blessed Lord; and the ends for which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered are the same as those of the sacrifice of the cross."

The catechism asks: "Is there any difference between the sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass?" And answers, "Yes; the manner in which the sacrifice is offered is different. On the cross Christ really shed His blood and was really slain; in the Mass there is no real shedding of blood or real death, because Christ can die no more; but the sacrifice of the Mass through the separate consecration of the bread and wine represents His death on the cross." In the sacrifice of the Mass Christ offers Himself under the appearances of bread and wine. Here we have a difference, indeed, but not one which affects the nature of the sacrifice. A generous heart is of the same worth whether it beats under the garments of a beggar or of a king; the value of a piece of gold is not altered even though it is hidden away and wrapped up in a piece of dirty paper; neither are the sacred body and blood of Christ less precious, because in the Mass

they are offered under the lowly appearances of bread and wine. Does our heavenly Father not know? Do we not firmly believe what these appearances conceal?

But there is still a further difference. The sacrifice of the cross was a bloody sacrifice; the shedding of the precious blood was accompanied by inconceivable pain and suffering, and was consummated only when the last drop had been spilled; in the holy sacrifice of the Mass it is the risen and glorified body of Christ, incapable of corruption, suffering, or death that is offered. But, again, this does not in any way alter the nature of the sacrifice. Which is the more precious and beautiful gift, a body dying or dead, or one risen and glorified, radiant like the sun, purer than snow, and the beauty of which fills the angels and the whole court of heaven with astonishment and delight? I do not know. One thing I do know, and that is that Christ, whether dying upon the cross or offering Himself to His heavenly Father in the Mass, forms a sacrifice equally meritorious and pleasing in the sight of God.

There is yet a final point of difference. The sacrifice of the cross was offered once only; but the Holy Mass is celebrated continuously day after day on altars without number by a countless succession of priests; the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross was instituted that this might be so. But should we prize the Holy Mass less on this account? Certainly not. The proverb says, "familiarity breeds contempt"; and, unfortunately, it is true that we poor human creatures are inclined to attach less value

to those things which come within our common experience. The sun has risen every morning for centuries and centuries without intermission, and because it happens every day we have ceased to pay any attention to it; and yet the earth, if deprived of light and heat, would be nothing better than a dark place of imprisonment devoid of plants or flowers, or growth or life of any kind; everything would be frozen to death by the terrible cold. If the sun were even for one day to fail in fulfilling its office of giving light and heat to the earth, how eagerly men would watch next morning for any sign of its rising! How anxiously all eyes would be turned to the East! How great would be the rejoicing at its return! And yet this newly risen sun would be bringing them nothing that they had not enjoyed every day up to that time. In the same way the sacrifice of the Mass is not of less value because it is renewed daily. It is one and the same sacrifice as that of the cross, and we must thank God for it with grateful hearts, and endeavor to assist at it with the greatest reverence and devotion, if possible every day.

II

We must never forget that in its essence and nature the sacrifice of the Mass is in all respects the same as that of the cross, and that this truth entails on us special obligations.

(1) If the Mass is the same sacrifice as that offered on the cross, then the altar on which it is offered is not less holy than the wood of the cross on which Christ died. Consider how anx-

iously the true cross was sought for; what joy there was when it was found, how jealously it has been guarded, how carefully relics of it have been distributed. Those churches which possess even the tiniest splinter have good reason to pride themselves on so precious a treasure. This being so, have we not also reason to seek out the altar on which the Mass, the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, is offered, to approach it with delight; and to kneel and pray before it with reverence and devotion?

(2) If the Mass is essentially the same sacrifice as that of the cross, then we should look upon the churches where the Mass is celebrated as not less sacred than Golgotha. Formerly those places in the Holy Land which were the scene of Our Lord's life were so dear to the hearts of Christians that for the privilege of kissing the blessed ground and watering it with their tears pilgrims traveled to it from far distant countries; more than this, thousands of brave men responded to the call to arms and risked life and limb in fighting to recapture these sacred places from the hands of the infidel. Am I asking too much when I appeal to Christians to show reverence for the scene of the unbloody renewal of Our Lord's death, at least to the extent of never profaning a church by laughter and chattering, by giddy and irreverent demeanor.

(3) If the sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, it follows further that by assisting at Mass we may obtain those graces which would have been ours had we really and truly been present on Mount Calvary. How won-

derful and extensive is the vista thus opened up before our spiritual eyes! It would require a much longer time than we have at our disposal to deal adequately with all that this thought reveals to us. For the moment we must pass on and consider the final point of this instruction.

(4) If the sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same sacrifice, then it follows that we must assist at Mass with the attention, reverence, and devotion which we should have felt at the solemn moment of our Saviour's death on Mount Calvary, had we really been spectators of that awful scene. Now let us each imagine how we should have acted had we been really and truly present to see our Saviour staggering under the weight of the cross; if we had actually witnessed His being stripped, nailed to the cross, His agony and death. Should we have aided and abetted the executioners in their diabolical work? God forbid! Should we have laughed and made merry over our Saviour's wounds, or mocked and jeered at Him with the Pharisees, or looked on chatting and talking with the curious and indifferent crowd? Oh, I think we should have been very far from adopting any such attitude as this. Very well, then, let us refrain also from making fun of the ceremonies of the Mass; from letting our attention wander, and our eyes roam about carelessly and indifferently. How should we actually have behaved if, as believing Christians, we had stood on Mount Calvary at the foot of the cross? Should we not have struck our breast with the centurion, acknowledging the divinity of Christ, and prayed with the

good thief, "O Lord, remember me!" Should we not have embraced the cross with Magdalen, our hearts overflowing with sorrow, pity, gratitude, and love? With Our Lady and St. John our eyes would have been riveted to the face of our divine Saviour; His sufferings would have been reflected in us, till, like the holy Mother, our hearts were nearly broken. The very earth trembled and shook, the sun became darkened and refused to give its light; we, too, should have trembled at the awful mystery that was being enacted before us, and our souls would have been filled with a deep sense of sorrow and desolation. St. John describes in the Apocalypse what took place in heaven when the seven seals of the mysterious book had been opened by the Lamb: "There was silence in heaven, as it were, for half an hour." Christ is the Lamb, and the seven seals are the work of the Redemption; it was by the sacrifice of the cross that the seventh seal was opened and the book undone, in other words, that the work of Redemption was accomplished. At the completion of this stupendous task the whole court of heaven was filled with wonder, astonishment, and delight, and the song of praise sung by the angelic choirs uninterruptedly since the foundation of the universe was silenced, "as it were, for half an hour." Once more, therefore, let us repeat: The Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. If the sacrifice of the cross reduced the cherubim and seraphim to silence and wonderment, can we poor human creatures do less than to display by the greatest reverence, attention, and devotion our appreciation of the blessed

sacrifice of the Mass? Let us assist at it in the spirit of the centurion, of the good thief, of Magdalen, of St. John, and of our blessed Mother Mary, and, doing this, we shall deserve to obtain in full measure the fruits of this most holy sacrifice. Amen.

SERMON XXII

On the Fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

"Do this for a commemoration of Me" (*Luke* xxii. 19).

Last Sunday, in endeavoring to estimate the excellence and the value of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we found that it can be best described and summed up by saying in the words of the catechism, that "the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross." It naturally results from this that we must bring to the sacrifice of the Mass the attention, the reverence, the devotion which we should have felt had we really stood at the foot of the cross on Mount Calvary.

But this truth has another, an even wider application, and one well worthy of our attentive consideration, because it fully explains the objects for which Jesus Christ instituted the sacrifice of the Mass. Christ instituted the sacrifice of the Mass: (1) "to continue the sacrifice of the cross in His Church"; (2) to apply its precious fruits to our souls. The first object is attained by the very fact that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, and, this being so, it follows that by worthily assisting at Mass we may obtain the graces which would have been ours had we actually been present at Our Lord's death upon the cross.

Let us, therefore, in this instruction contemplate the holy tree of the cross, considering the rich fruits which it brought forth:

I. In the sinner.
II. In the just.

Thoughts such as these will help us, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to form some conception of the multitude of rich and precious graces which we have power to obtain by assisting devoutly at Holy Mass.

I

(a) We will dwell first on those fruits brought forth by the sacrifice of the cross in the hearts of sinners. It is no exaggeration to say that the crowd which thronged to witness the death of our Saviour was composed for the greater part of sinners. Among them were those people who, defying the divine justice, boldly took upon themselves the responsibility of this bloody act, crying out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him. His blood be upon us, and upon our children." Such men certainly brought no devotion to the Holy Sacrifice; they came out of mere idle curiosity; the Gospel says, "they sat and watched Him." But, nevertheless, Scripture records that the death of our Saviour brought forth a saving grace in these hardened hearts, indifferent, curious, and cruel as they were. We read: "All the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts." They had heard our Saviour pray for His enemies and had witnessed the patience and fortitude with which He bore His sufferings; they had felt the earth tremble under their feet, and seen the sun grow dark and refuse to give its light, and they went

on their way striking their breasts. Horror took possession of them; the thought that they had done to death an innocent man whose blood would really come upon them filled them with dread. A ray of divine light had touched them, rousing their hearts to fear, to pity for our Saviour, to sorrow for what they had done, thus preparing the way, in all probability for their conversion later on. St. Peter's sermon, by which 3,000 souls were converted, was preached at Pentecost not very many weeks after the events of the Passion; is it not more than likely that among the number of those who then embraced Christianity, there were many who had stood beside the death-bed of the Divine Victim. Oh! dearly beloved brethren, if these curious, indifferent, and callous spectators were allowed to partake so freely of the fruits of the divine sacrifice, how full and abundant will the measure of grace be that will flow from it to those who assist at Holy Mass with real devotion, joined to deep humility and reverence.

(b) The centurion present at the crucifixion was also a sinner, a pagan, an unbeliever. He was there in his official capacity to overlook the soldiers, to give orders, and to keep a sharp eye on all that occurred. He was not actuated by any feelings of devotion, and yet his soul was privileged to receive some of the fruits of the great sacrifice. The Gospel says: "Now the centurion, seeing what was done, glorified God," and St. Matthew expressly tells us that he said to the soldiers: "Indeed this man was the Son of God." What a wonderful grace he received, the gift of faith, the beginning, and root of all justice, the

foundation of the spiritual life! From the darkness he came to the light; out of paganism he found his way to Christianity. If, then, this pagan standing at the foot of the cross obtained such precious graces as the fruit of his assistance at the sacrifice, surely the faithful who join devoutly in the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary will be equally blessed. Their faith will be confirmed and protected, and they will be strengthened to confess it by living in accordance with its teaching; further, we may feel sure that their prayers for the spread of our holy religion, for the enlightenment of those nations who are still in darkness and in the shadow of death, will not be offered in vain.

(c) We have still to mention another sinner, who plucked from the tree of the cross the most saving and glorious fruits—the repentant thief. There is no doubt that he was a great sinner. A life of wickedness given up to robbery and perhaps even to murder and bloodshed lay behind him; death on the cross, judgment, and eternity stared him in the face. But it fell to his lot to be condemned, to suffer, and die side by side with the great high priest of the New Testament; the hour of his death was to coincide with the completion of the great sacrifice of the New Law; and it proved to be also the hour of his conversion. Grace flowed to him from the cross and enabled him to see his own guilt, and to realize the innocence and spotlessness of the Saviour; by the light of faith which broke on him he acknowledged our Saviour as his Lord, as a king whose kingdom awaited Him after death. He repented of his in-

iquities, he trusted, he prayed; full forgiveness was granted him, and he expired in the certainty of being admitted to heaven: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." In this one hour the soul of the thief, from the very abyss of destruction, had risen up to the gates of Paradise.

Amongst those who assist at Holy Mass there may often be souls with the guilt of grievous sin upon their conscience, to whom repentance and conversion offer such obstacles that they have given up all thought of amendment as too difficult, even as impossible. Oh, dearly beloved brethren, let such as these only pray with devotion and contrition, with reverence and confidence at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and what is difficult will become easy, the impossible will be made possible, and they will turn with love and longing to what before they refused and rejected.

II

Let us pass on to contemplate the fruits brought forth by the sacrifice of the cross in the souls of the just. Among the women we will consider first Mary Magdalen. She was living in a state of grace, having received from Our Lord's own lips forgiveness for her sins. But it is one thing to receive the grace of God and another to persevere in it to the end. Final perseverance is not easy, especially for those who, like Mary Magdalen, have formed deeply rooted habits of sin, and who have lived in the midst of its occasions. Perseverance requires a special grace even for the just who have been faithful to the law of God all their lives.

Now see how Mary Magdalen assists at the Holy Sacrifice! From the beginning to the end embracing the cross with both her arms, she was dissolved in tears of pity and of contrition. What prayers must have come from her heart, how earnestly she must have besought our Saviour not to forsake her, what resolutions she made, what promises she gave Him; and what graces she received! Tradition tells us that not only did she persevere to the end in all good, but that she was enabled to lead, till the day of her happy and blessed death, a life of the most severe penance.

Every time we assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass we ought to pray with great earnestness and confidence for grace to advance in virtue and to persevere to the end in the exercise of all good. This is the greatest and the most necessary of all graces—the crowning grace. "Ask and you shall receive." Oh, the Church knew well what she was doing when she commanded the faithful to assist on all Sundays and holydays at the holy sacrifice of the Mass!

Beside the cross there was also St. John the Evangelist, the only one of the apostles who followed the Master to Calvary. He had already been specially favored by witnessing the Transfiguration, and by being allowed to rest his head on our Saviour's breast at the last supper. What further grace did Our Lord reserve for this disciple, who, alone of the apostles, assisted devoutly and sorrowfully at the great closing scene of our Saviour's life? A very special one: "Son, behold thy Mother." All our Saviour's own claims and duties as regards His holy mother were be-

stowed upon the beloved disciple. How sweet these obligations must have been to St. John! What a reward for his fidelity in being present at the great sacrifice!

Let us remember that by assisting at the sacrifice of the Mass, as St. John did, we, too, establish a claim to the protection, the intercession, and the love of our Lady. We become her children, she becomes our Mother; and can any one be lost with Mary for his Mother?

Finally, let us contemplate her who of all those that stood at the foot of the cross was the purest and holiest—Mary, the Mother of Sorrows. Who can express her feelings as she stood on Mount Calvary? The mother of a priest is filled with joy when she assists at his first Mass; what did this holy Mother experience as she assisted at the great sacrifice in which her divine Son offered Himself for the first time in pain and anguish? His sufferings found an echo in her heart; the sword of sorrow pierced her very soul. We can not say that Mary was devout and attentive, sympathetic and loyal as she looked on at the great sacrifice; the feelings of the other spectators may be described in this language, but such expressions are inadequate and out of place when we are speaking of our blessed Mother. Never since the beginning of all the centuries in which the Holy Mass has been celebrated has any Christian assisted at it with the burning fervor and devotion, the depth of feeling, the utter self-abandonment and resignation, the degree of sorrow that Mary brought to the sacrifice of her divine Son upon Mount Calvary; all the fervor, the faith,

and devotion, of all the faithful in all ages joined together would still fall immeasurably short of those feelings which moved the heart of the Mother of God as she stood under the cross of her Son.

Now what reward could the Saviour, who repays even the most feeble ray of devotion in the hearts of those who assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, what reward I say, could He bestow on His most blessed Mother? He could not give her the gift of faith like the centurion, for she already possessed it; neither could He forgive her as He forgave the penitent thief, for she was without sin. He could not grant her the grace of final perseverance which He gave to Magdalen, because Mary was confirmed in grace. What reward had He to offer her? Ah, this is a thing we may well lay to heart. He allowed her the privilege of sharing in His anguish; of suffering with Him, through Him, for Him; of enduring with fortitude so that she might then taste the joy and sweetness which springs from suffering, for there is nothing greater, or more meritorious than to suffer with Christ. "Mary has chosen the better part."

All that we have been saying has a very practical application for each one of us. It is often the case that we go to Mass full of sorrow and anxiety. Sad memories of the past, solicitude for the future, domestic troubles, illness, unhappiness in married life, anxiety on account of children—all these things are but too often stumbling-blocks to devotion; yet we might use them to great advantage, making them even the very

means by which to obtain the full fruit of the Holy Sacrifice. We shall do this if we offer our troubles to Our Lord, asking Him to give us patience, fortitude, resignation, and praying that we may resemble Him and His blessed Mother more and more. Pray in this spirit and your prayer will be heard, and once you possess graces such as these nothing more will be wanting to you, for the road of the cross leads to merit, to glory, to blessedness—to Heaven. Amen.

SERMON XXIII

On the Completeness of the Sacrifice of the Mass

"In every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (*Malach.* i. 11).

OVER and above those questions which have engaged our attention with reference to the nature, the figures, the institution, the merits, and the fruits of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, there remain many others which we might consider with great profit to ourselves—such as, for instance, the parts and ceremonies of the Mass, the places and times at which it is celebrated, the vestments worn by the priest, the prayers of the Missal, the language in which Mass is said. But as time presses we must pass over these matters, and apply ourselves to trying to realize, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the completeness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as the most perfect act of divine praise, thanksgiving, petition, and propitiation.

I

The Mass is a sacrifice of perfect praise. To praise and glorify God is our first and most natural duty, and it is an instinct so fundamental that all creatures reasonable and unreasonable, spiritual and material, heavenly and earthly, are affected by it. God, having created all things for His own honor and glory, there can be no relaxation of this law, which has existed from the be-

ginning and will continue to the end. God Himself, because He is God, can not dispense us from it. It is a law obeyed by the unreasoning creation. Every leaf that withers and falls, that unfolds its tender green, bears witness to the wisdom and beauty of God. The waves of the sea as they rise and fall, the constellations in the firmament, all testify to the greatness of the creator. The members of the reasonable creation also glorify God; sometimes they do it against their own will, like the damned in hell, whose flames are a perpetual tribute to God's justice, which punishes sin with such terrible severity. But God receives willing praise from many hearts and lips here on earth, and in heaven He hears the continual song of praise sung by the heavenly choirs: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, for whose will all things have been created!" But, do you want to know how God is praised and glorified most perfectly? Perhaps your thoughts will turn at once to our Lady, whose song of praise in heaven rises high above even the voices of the angels; but, no; it is by the holy sacrifice of the Mass that God is honored in the most perfect manner. By the Holy Sacrifice, God is honored not in words only, but in deeds; there the eternal Son, co-equal and co-substantial with the Father, bends down low before Him, humbling Himself to earth, to the altar, condescending to be lifted up in the hands of a sinful man, assuming the form of a little bread and a few drops of wine. Day and night, year in and year out, He perseveres in this attitude of self-abasement, giving honor and glory to the Most High. This,

indeed, is honoring God as He deserves. What is the praise of any creature, be he saint or sinner? What is the song of the angels? What are all the gifts which we have power to give to God—in comparison with one single Mass? They are as nothing. Even could the earth and the sun and all the stars join together as one single grain of incense and burn and be consumed to God's glory, it would be as nothing in comparison to the glory given Him in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. It is beyond compare the most complete and perfect act of praise.

II

The sacrifice of the Mass is the most perfect act of thanksgiving. Every one owes gratitude to those from whom benefits are received; we show our appreciation of even the smallest civilities by a friendly look, or a word of thanks. Consider the sum of gratitude which is due from us to Almighty God, whose benefits are without number, and of such magnitude that eternity would not afford us time adequately to express our thanks to Him. God's benefits to us have been of the spiritual as well as the material order, both natural and supernatural; we have received them in the past, and will continue to receive them in the future. Not only has He preserved us from great evils, He has actually bestowed great blessings upon us. If we look around us we see that all things in heaven and earth were created for our use, to help us to our eternal salvation. If we turn our eyes inward upon ourselves, we become aware of the immortal soul which is God's

gift. If we look downward there is the abyss of hell from which He has saved us; if we raise our eyes upward we see heaven, to which He has called us. "What can be worthy of His benefits."

Further, we must bear in mind that God has heaped His benefits upon us, out of pure and disinterested love, without there being any kind of merit or claim on our side, and that He continues to bestow them even on the least worthy among us up to this very hour.

"What can be worthy of His benefits?" said Tobias, the younger, in relating to his father all that the angelic companion of his journey had done for him. What can we give to God for all He has done for us? We possess nothing that is in any sense proportionate to what we owe Him. Are we, then, compelled to appear ungrateful all our lives. No; we have the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and in offering it to God as an act of thanksgiving we can say to Him: "Merciful Father, we offer Thee in this sacrifice Thy dearly beloved Son, a gift more precious than anything Thou hast given to us. It is true that Thou didst once send Him to us on earth, but we offer Him in sacrifice to Thee every day, in gratitude for all that Thou hast done for us, and for which we should never be able to thank thee sufficiently." A perfect act of thanksgiving.

III

Our duty is not only to praise and to thank God, but also to beg of Him all graces for soul and body. In this respect we are, indeed, in a sorry plight, for the poorer and more wretched

we are the more we are in need of God's grace, but at the same time the less we deserve to be heard by the just and all-holy God. How do men try to make good their claim when it is a question of obtaining some distinction or mark of favor from a great king? They call attention to the services they have rendered to the state or to the person of the king, in peace or in war; they point to their years of faithful service, and to the distinctions and orders they have obtained; they pledge their loyalty and fidelity for the future, and go on to praise the king's generosity, his sympathy and goodness; and in the end, in all probability, they succeed in securing what they want. But we are not in a position to employ such methods as these in pleading with the great king. Where are our merits, our years of faithful service? But too often we can only point to years of sin. What of the distinctions and favors with which God has loaded us? They have been both great and numerous, but we have misused them. We may promise better things for the future, but the eye of God can see how far we will carry out our promises; on what, then, can we found our claim in order that it may have power and strength before the throne of God. We can find nothing in ourselves, but we can find it in Christ: "If you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you." Our prayer will derive strength from the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for in it Christ Himself intercedes for us. He points to His merits, to His holy life, His sufferings, His sacred wounds, His precious blood; to the cross, and to the sacrifice in which

He offers Himself daily, as well as to the tender love which leads Him to give Himself. Oh, no one could turn away from such a prayer as this, much less the beloved Father of this much-beloved Son.

Dearly beloved brethren, is there any one of you who comes to Holy Mass and has nothing to pray for? Not one of you, I feel sure. Wives want graces for their husbands, husbands for their wives; children want to pray for their parents, parents for their children; subordinates of all kinds must pray for their spiritual and temporal superiors, for the Pope, for their rulers, for the poor, the sick, the dying, for unbelievers, for the souls in purgatory, for those who are exposed to temptation. There is no end to the graces and favors which a heart full of faith will implore. Oh, let us unite in prayer with our divine Saviour, offering Himself in the Holy Mass for us; by so doing, we shall be making the most perfect and complete act of intercession.

IV

Finally, the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the most perfect act of propitiation. We have not only to praise and to thank God, we have also to propitiate Him, for He is offended by the wrong-doing of His creatures. When we reflect how often and how grievously men sin, and remember the paltry and unworthy motives and objects that lead them away from God, when we consider the majesty of God and the justice of His punishments and think how easily He can be revenged on the insignificant creature who is guilty of

offending Him, we may well feel that to propitiate the wrath of God is an impossible task. We are just as little in a position to satisfy for the wrong we have done, as the servant in the Gospel was able to pay the 10,000 talents he owed his master. But the innocent Lamb of God came, and took upon Himself the guilt of the whole world, atoning for it with His death. By renewing His sacrifice every day in the Mass He makes an appeal to His Father to stay His hand and have mercy on the sinner; to spare mankind for the sake of His sufferings, His wounds, His bloody sacrifice on the cross, by which God has been more glorified than He has been offended by all the sins of the world. Now we can understand why God Almighty is so much more merciful in His dealings with the sinner under the New Law than He was under the Old Law. We read that for one sin of adultery thousands of the tribe of Benjamin were put to death; that for King David's pride of thought his people were ravaged by the plague; that for irreverence toward the Ark of the Covenant thousands of the inhabitants of Bethshemesh were struck dead on the spot. Are we free to-day from adultery, from pride in thought, word, and deed, from irreverence in the house of God? What numbers would have to die were such offences punished to-day as they were under the Old Law. God destroyed almost the entire human race by the flood. Why? Because, as Scripture tells us, "they were flesh," that is, given up to the sins of the flesh. Are sins of the flesh a thing of the past? What would become of the world and of the whole of mankind if God were

to punish sins of the flesh with the same severity as of old? It is by the sacrifice of the New Law, the Holy Mass, the perfect and complete propitiation, that God's justice is satisfied.

"Have patience with me," said the servant in the Gospel, "and I will pay thee all." We can speak as he did and say to God, "Have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all. It is not in our power to give to Thee the honor due to Thee, but Thy divine Son made man, when He humbles Himself so deeply before Thee, gives it in our stead. We are not in a position to make Thee the smallest return for any of Thy benefits; but Jesus Christ repays Thee for us. Our prayers are not worthy to be heard, much less to be granted, but Jesus Christ intercedes for us and with us. His prayer will be answered. We could never hope to offer Thee full atonement for our sins, but look upon the sacrifice offered Thee by Thy beloved Son, and be merciful. Have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all."

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is a perfect act of praise, of thanksgiving, of petition, of propitiation, and demands from us, whenever we assist at it, great reverence of body and full attention of mind. If we try, dearly beloved brethren, to unite ourselves constantly with the Holy Sacrifice, assuredly we shall obtain all those graces necessary for us: sorrow for our sins, comfort in suffering, perseverence in good, and a holy and blessed end. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

On Spiritual Communion

"I am the bread of life" (*John* vi. 48).

At the very beginning of our explanations on the Blessed Sacrament we learned that our Saviour had a threefold object in instituting the Holy Eucharist. First, He wanted to make Himself our companion, and for this His real presence among us was necessary; therefore, in our instructions we first considered carefully the doctrine of the real presence. But our Saviour wanted further to offer Himself as our sacrifice to His heavenly Father; we spent some time in contemplating from every point of view the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Thirdly, our Saviour wished to be the food and nourishment of our souls, and this is what He actually becomes when He gives Himself to us in holy communion.

It still remains for us to consider holy communion, its nature, its effects; also the precept by which we are commanded to receive the body and blood of Christ and the preparation necessary beforehand, as well as the thanksgiving after holy communion.

"What is holy communion?" "Holy communion is the receiving of the body and blood of Christ."

The word "communion" is derived from the Latin and means union; this name is very expressive of holy communion, by which Jesus Christ

is, indeed, united in a peculiarly close and intimate manner with the communicant. What can be more part of us than the food which we eat? It becomes one with us. Moreover, holy communion draws men nearer together, by making them guests of the same loving host, receiving the same food at the same table, animated by the same feelings of faith and longing and love. All are in a state of grace, and children of God. How widely differences of station, of fortune, of education, outlook, and inclination separate men from one another here below! Barriers so great are sometimes raised up by envy, hatred, greed, or revenge, that we can no longer see or hear or understand each other; only at the Lord's table do high and low, rich and poor, young and old, learned and ignorant, saint and sinner meet together to enjoy the same food. Holy communion is a close bond of union which embraces all.

In holy communion we receive Christ actually and substantially His body and His blood. An actual and substantial enjoyment is greater than a merely spiritual one; so real and actual communion is a greater and a higher thing than spiritual communion. But actual communion is not always possible, and I wish very much to speak to you on the subject of spiritual communion. It will not, thus, be out of place to say a few words on the subject, considering:

I. In what it consists.
II. The ease with which it may be made.
III. The profit to be derived from it.

I

Spiritual communion may be described correctly and briefly as the desire for actual communion and its effects; it is this desire that constitutes its very pith and essence. What have we to do if we want to make a spiritual communion? I can give you a very simple and easy method which you will have no difficulty in remembering. Do you recollect what the priest says in the Mass just before he receives holy communion? "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed!" He also repeats these same words three times immediately before he administers holy communion to the faithful, as if they contained in themselves the shortest and most simple preparation for receiving our Saviour.

To make a spiritual communion repeat these words three times with great devotion and with your mind concentrated on their meaning. The first time you repeat them lay the emphasis on the word "Lord," for it is the expression of your faith. So to address our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament implies firm belief in the real presence within it of Him who is the Lord of heaven and earth, of angels and men, the almighty and eternal God. The second time you say this prayer accentuate in a special manner the words, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof"; call to mind why you are not worthy: first, because the guest expected is so great, so pure, so holy, that no creature can ever be worthy to receive Him, and, next, because the dwelling of

your heart is so lowly, so poor in good works, so covered with the dust of venial sin, so stained with the traces of mortal sin, so polluted with evil inclinations and desires. To feel sorrow for our sins because they make us more unworthy to receive Our Lord is the best act of humility and sorrow we can make to prepare our hearts for holy communion.

The third time emphasize, and say from your heart: "Say only the word, and my soul shall be healed." By this prayer we give expression to the desire that our Saviour should speak this word so rich in grace; we show our confidence that He will speak it; and that it will have power to heal our wounded, sick, weak, and miserable soul. "Say only the word, and my soul shall be healed." A word from Christ will overcome our temptations, and enable us to pursue good with greater ardor than before; it will change our weakness into strength, our want of courage to heroism, our indolence to zeal, our coldness to burning flames of love. "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed!" There are, no doubt, many equally good ways of making a spiritual communion, but it can be well made by this simple and easy method.

II

Compared to what is required of us before we may actually approach the altar and receive Our Lord, the conditions for making a spiritual communion are very simple, indeed. Children are not allowed to make their first communion before they

have reached a certain age, sick people are often unable to make the effort to go to church at all, the very poor may feel sensitive about the wretchedness of their appearance and dress; it is obligatory to be fasting from midnight and, moreover, we must be in a state of grace, which involves making a good confession. But there is nothing in the wide world to prevent us from communicating spiritually as often as we wish, so long as we try each time to arouse contrition in our hearts. Formerly there were comparatively few people who were permitted to go to holy communion every day, and even a priest may only by rare exception communicate more than once each day. But we may communicate spiritually as many times a day as our devotion prompts us to do. It is the simplest matter in the world, and for this reason we should make it a daily practice at Mass during the communion of the priest.

III

Although the practice of spiritual communion is so easy it is of very great use to our souls. Even taking the fruits of actual communion at their highest, and those of spiritual communion at their lowest, there still remains and must necessarily be, a great similarity between them. Souls who find it impossible to receive actual Baptism, receive all the graces of the sacrament if, with true contrition, they ardently desire it. Under certain circumstances the same is true of Confirmation. Well, should it not also be so with regard to the sacrament of the Eucharist? Spiritual communion is the ardent, contrite desire to

receive the body of Christ, and, though it certainly does not bring forth the same fruits as actual communion, it produces very similar ones in our hearts. Spiritual communion is a very good preparation for the actual reception of Our Lord, and this reason alone should determine us to practise this devotion.

In looking on at the lives of Christians, it does not require great powers of observation to become aware of a fact that it would be difficult to overlook. The practice of spiritual communion almost invariably goes hand in hand with frequent actual communion; while, on the other hand, those souls who do not practise spiritual communion are invariably those who very rarely present themselves at the Lord's table. We see, therefore, that the two go together, and that in their results they are closely related. The one is the outcome of the other, just as our meals are regulated according to our appetite. If we are hungry we shall make use of our opportunities for taking food, and regular meals will but conduce to good appetite. Now, spiritual communion is the desire, the hunger, as it were, for receiving Our Lord, and it is clear what the result of this spiritual longing and hunger must be. It is related in the life of St. Catherine that Our Lord appeared to her holding in his right hand a vase made of gold, and in his left one made of silver; when she asked Him what they signified, He said the one represented her actual, the other her spiritual communions.

Oh, how easy and simple of practice is the devotion of spiritual communion. Let us, as the

result of this instruction, firmly resolve every night after our examination of conscience to rouse our hearts to perfect contrition, and every morning either at Mass or in our morning prayers to make a spiritual communion. Then our whole life, morning and evening, day and night, will turn on an axle resting on two points of support —spiritual confession and spiritual communion. Should death come upon us unawares, sleeping or waking, it will not find us unprepared, and will be for us but the gate of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXV

On the Duty of Receiving Holy Communion

"Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you" (*John* vi. 54).

LAST Sunday we saw in what spiritual communion consists and how easily made and profitable to our souls is this practice of devotion. But we must not content ourselves merely with spiritual communion; we must from time to time communicate really and actually. We have a strict duty to do so, and this instruction will be devoted to showing you, with the help of the Holy Ghost:

I. By whom this duty has been imposed upon us.

II. How often we are called upon to fulfill it.

I

Who has commanded us to receive holy communion? Jesus Christ Himself. When did He command this? In the synagogue at Capharnaum, when He promised to institute the Blessed Sacrament, saying: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." In other words, "You must eat My flesh and drink My blood; you must receive holy communion." There can be no manner of doubt that Jesus Christ did issue such a command, and that no one could have a better right to determine the use we are

to make of this sacrament than He who instituted it, and who is, moreover, the head of the Church, and the Son of God. The command was given in very impressive language, "Amen, amen, I say unto you"; in order to make it more binding the words of Our Lord contained the threat that whoever failed to obey it would not have life. Now, one may dispute whether our Saviour referred to the life of sanctifying grace, or to eternal life. But, whichever way we understand His words, it is clear that those who fail to obey His commands are threatened with a very severe punishment, namely, to be deprived either of sanctifying grace or of eternal life.

But our Saviour sought to enforce His words not only by means of a threat; He has tried to make His command acceptable to us by attaching to the fulfillment of it the most glorious promises: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die." "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever." "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day." "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." Nothing greater or more sublime can be offered us! Perseverance in grace, a glorious resurrection, and eternal life, are to be the reward of those who fulfill a duty that is in itself both sweet and light.

But there is little cause for us to consider either the threats or the promises which our Saviour has attached to the command of receiving holy communion. What should most have power to

urge and impel us, and almost force us, to receive holy communion is the incomprehensible love which led our Saviour to institute this sacrament, the thought of the indescribable humiliation to which He subjects Himself in it for our sakes, the high honor that is paid us, in inviting us to partake of this banquet of divine love.

II

Our Saviour commanded us to receive Him in holy communion, but He did not define at what age, or season, or how often we were to do so. It devolves, therefore, on the Church, our instructor in matters of faith, the dispenser of the divine mysteries and graces, the guide of Christians, to lay down all the necessary regulations in connection with our duty in this respect.

In the early days of the Church the extreme zeal of the first Christians made it unnecessary to frame any rules about the reception of holy communion by the faithful. They appear to have assisted every day, or nearly every day, at Mass, and to have received holy communion every time. But, as time went on, this first fervor died away, and rules and regulations became necessary. In the beginning they depended entirely on the rulings of the individual bishops of the different dioceses, or on the decisions in council of the bishops of the different countries, and it was generally understood that the faithful should approach the sacraments three or four times a year on special feasts. But these were not laws which applied to the whole Church. It was at the Fourth Lateran Council of the Church, in the year 1215,

therefore, nearly 700 years ago, that the command was first given to all the faithful, all over the world, who had come to the use of reason "to receive the Holy Eucharist at Easter-time," therefore, at least, once a year in their parish church. This is the fourth commandment of the Church.

People sometimes say: "Just so; once a year is the time appointed by the Church. I keep to that and attempt neither more nor less." Now it is true that by going to holy communion once a year, we comply with the commandment framed by the Church, with due regard for the coldness and indifference of many Christians, and we escape the punishments with which those who disobey it are threatened. Those who fail to make their Easter communion commit a grievous sin which cuts them off from the communion of the Church, and deprives them of the right to Christian burial. But it is not sufficient if we want to satisfy the wishes of the Church, to advance on the road to heaven, and to respond to our Saviour's gracious invitation. The amount of food, both liquid and solid, necessary daily in order to sustain life has been accurately calculated; little, very little is enough—a little bread and a little water. But what would you say if it was suggested that your food should be cut down to this minimum allowance? Would you not remonstrate and point out that, though enough to keep a man from starvation, it was absolutely inadequate to support him through hard work, or at the period of growth; neither could it build up and restore him when he is exhausted, or on long voyages, or engaged in fighting against his

enemies. Can you, then, possibly believe that to go to holy communion once a year is sufficient for those who are suffering from grievous temptation, for those who are bound with the chain of evil habits, who, amid all the dangers and the passions of youth and the world, are trying to advance along the road to heaven? Such as these must receive the bread of the strong often, oftener, at any rate, than once a year.

How often is it necessary? This is not easy to determine. A very learned divine once gave a very simple rule which received the sanction of a very holy Pope. He said: "There is no one for whom monthly communion is not advisable, and [illegible] who could not be allowed weekly communion." Since, then, we have the authority of one of the holiest of his successors for saying that even for sinners who are conscious of their own infidelity and weakness, even daily communion is not too much to aspire to. You see, therefore, monthly or weekly communion is always allowed and daily communion but seldom forbidden, and certainly to communicate twice, three, four, six times a year could not be considered anything out of the way either by the Church or our confessor, or any of our fellow-Christians.

We will now turn to the arguments we hear raised against frequent communion. Some found their objections entirely on themselves; they say: "I have so little devotion, I feel so little devotion, I see so little fruit, I am beset with temptations to distractions, to impatience, to envy, to indifference, even to unbelief. Under these conditions how can I dare to communicate frequently?"

Now, objections such as these are very worthless. It is not to our *feelings* of devotion we must look, but to the pains we take to awaken our devotion; not to the visible fruit, but to the amount of our endeavor to advance in true piety. Perfection does not consist in the absence of temptation, but in resisting temptations, be they as frequent, as numerous, as persistent, as grievous, as they will.

Others object to frequent communion on the score of the lives of those who do actually communicate frequently, weekly, or even daily. Look, they say, at those who every Sunday and holy-day, even every week-day, go up to the altar. Are they any better for it? Are they not uncharitable in their words, neglectful in their work, harsh in their judgments, full of the spirit of pride? These arguments, whether there be any truth in them or not, constitute a serious warning to those who communicate frequently to be careful that their life and all their words and actions are in harmony with the presence of our Saviour within them; if they do not do this there is danger that frequent communion may but increase their burden of responsibility, and one might almost go the length of saying that in such cases less frequent communion would be preferable. Apart from these considerations this argument has little value. Why should you so magnify the faults and failings of those who communicate frequently, while overlooking so much in yourselves? It is not necessary to be an angel before one may go frequently to holy communion; all that is required is the earnest endeavor to become perfect. If you

examine into things and compare them fairly you will find that the souls who preserve their innocence and are faithful to grace, who bear suffering patiently, and learn to overcome their evil inclinations are those who communicate frequently, and not those who approach the altar once a year because they are obliged to do so.

The final objection to holy communion rests upon the dignity and holiness of the Blessed Sacrament itself. Men say: "When I consider who it is that I receive in holy communion, I do not dare to approach, and can only say, 'Lord, I am not worthy!' " In truth, when we realize what the Blessed Sacrament contains, no one can be found fit and worthy to receive it, neither man, nor saint, nor angel. But, when we remember that our Saviour instituted this sacrament expressly for mankind, taking even the very form of the food that serves as our daily nourishment, and that He has invited us all in the most pressing way to partake of it, then we feel that such preparation as good will makes possible to all—even to us—is all that can be required of us, and that dispositions possible only to angels or saints can not be expected of us poor weak creatures.

The love of our Saviour, the good of our own soul, the wish of the Church, the example of pious Christians at all times, urge us to the practice of frequent communion. The objections brought forward against it are of no value, and the arguments in its favor are incontestable. Let us, therefore, both in youth and in old age, in sickness and in health, make full use of this great means of

grace; it is the bridge over which we will pass safely to eternity: our comfort at the hour of death, our strength in our last agony, our justification before the judgment seat, our food for everlasting life. Amen.

SERMON XXVI

On Communion under One Kind

"He that eateth this bread shall live forever" (*John* vi. 59).

We have seen that holy communion is "the receiving of the body and blood of Christ." Further, we have considered spiritual communion, and how easily and with what profit to our soul we may make it. Finally, we have taken to heart the fact that a strict obligation to receive Our Lord in holy communion has been laid upon us, both by Jesus Christ who instituted the Blessed Sacrament and by the Church who dispenses it.

Now, when we go to holy communion, is it necessary to drink the chalice in order to receive the blood of Christ? No, it is not; for under the form of bread we receive Christ whole and entire; therefore, we receive His blood also.

We already know that this is so; we are familiar from daily experience with the fact that the priest who says the Mass receives communion under two forms, while he administers it to the faithful under that of bread alone. Not only is this the universal practice; it is more, it is an ordinance of the Church, and we may assert with truth that in making it the Church was:

I. Within the full exercise of her rights.
II. Entirely justified.

We will take these two points for the subject

of our instruction to-day, considering them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The Church was fully entitled to make such a regulation, for to her is entrusted the guardianship of the Blessed Sacrament as of all the sacraments. To whom else should such a right belong? If the faithful were allowed to determine under what form they would receive holy communion, the greatest confusion would be the result. Some would want to communicate under one form, some under two; some under the form of bread, others under the form of wine. Or should such a matter as this be left to the appointment of the civil authorities? A perfectly impossible condition of things would be the result. As a matter of fact, it is the Church who has appointed that the Blessed Sacrament shall be preserved in a tabernacle and has determined what vessels are to be used, how it is to be carried to the sick—as well as the different vestments and all the prayers and ceremonies connected with its administration. No one denies to the Church the right to regulate such things. Why, then, should she not also be entitled to decide under what form holy communion is to be given to the faithful, whether under both forms or under one? And if under one only, whether under that of bread or of wine?

This is all very well, you may say. No one contests that the Church is the guardian and administrator of the Blessed Sacrament, but Christ, having instituted the Blessed Sacrament under both forms, the Church has no right to say that

we are to communicate under one form only. The power of the Church does not extend so far as to allow her to overrule Our Lord's own decrees. Christ Himself said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." He spoke of both eating and drinking. Now, to meet these objections, I should like to point out that in this very same chapter of the Gospel of St. John our Saviour four times makes mention of the bread alone: (1) "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me"; (2) "He that eateth this bread shall live forever"; (3) "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever"; (4) "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die." Moreover, when our Saviour made use of the words quoted in support of the objections with which we are dealing, He was not speaking of the form either of bread or of wine, and nowhere did He definitely say that both forms must be received; He merely stated that to attain eternal life it was necessary to receive His body and blood. Therefore, the Church has not in any way acted against our Saviour's ordinance by decreeing that holy communion is to be given to the faithful under one form only, because under this one form we receive Christ whole and entire and, therefore, His blood also.

It is sometimes further urged that at the last supper, when offering the chalice, our Saviour said: "Drink ye all of this." He was then speaking of the apostles, who did all drink of it. There is nothing to suggest that these words referred in any way to us.

Again, it is said that though the Church undoubtedly possesses the right to make appointments concerning the administration of the sacraments, that still she is not entitled to alter and mutilate a sacrament as she is doing by dispensing holy communion under one form instead of under two. It is not the form that constitutes the sacrament; it is the body and blood of Christ; both body and blood are contained in one form quite as fully as under two; therefore, there can be no question of the Church having in any way tampered with the sacrament when she gives holy communion to the faithful under one form only.

Finally, it is objected—and this objection is the most plausible of all—that if our Saviour instituted the Blessed Sacrament under two forms, it was because He meant it to be administered under two forms. Had He meant it to be administered under one form only then He would have instituted it under one form only. This difficulty can be very easily dealt with. Christ instituted the Blessed Eucharist under two forms, because for reasons which I have already fully explained to you two forms are necessary for the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The two forms of bread and wine are necessary for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, but they are not necessary for holy communion. Even from the earliest times the Church dispensed holy communion under one form only, and we read of the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles: "They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of the bread and in prayers." This meant

that they listened to the preaching of the apostles and that they persevered in the practice of general communion—the breaking of the bread—under one form, and joined in common prayer. It perhaps had even then become customary to give Holy Communion under one form, that of bread only.

II

It was at the Council of Constance that this custom, already widely prevalent, finally became law, and the Council of Trent clearly explained that the Church adopted the giving of holy communion under one form only for grave and weighty reasons, and that her ruling must not be departed from.

What were the reasons which actuated the Church in turning what had long been the common practice into a binding law? There were three principal reasons: (1) Solicitude for the faithful; (2) anxiety to protect the Blessed Sacrament from profanation; (3) the wish to ensure purity of doctrine.

(1) Solicitude for the faithful—to remove everything that might make it difficult to receive the Blessed Sacrament.

As regards those who wish to receive holy communion, if every one were obliged to communicate under both forms, what would be the result? Many people can not endure the taste of wine; others, especially in a fasting condition, are made ill by the very smell of it. They would be obliged to stay away. You may say their number is very small; that may be, but what about the number

of those who would strongly object to drinking out of the chalice used by every one? Their number certainly would not be small. What would be done in this case? To provide a separate chalice for each communicant would be an impossibility; therefore, it is to be feared, many out of fastidiousness would stay away from holy communion altogether. Soon after I became a priest I had the following experience. I was giving holy communion at Easter-time in one of our parish churches. A good many had received holy communion, but there was still a large number waiting to come up to the altar. All of a sudden the communion bench was cleared; one man only knelt at the rails, every one else holding back. I was puzzled at first, but the reason soon became apparent to me. The mouth and all the lower part of the face of this unfortunate creature was eaten away by cancer, and presented a really terrible sight. I gave him holy communion and as soon as he rose and went away the rest of the congregation who were waiting came forward. Now, what do you think they would have done if, in order to receive holy communion, they had been obliged to drink out of the chalice from which this poor cancerous man had just drunk? I think there is no doubt they would have given up their communion altogether. Further, if it were necessary for every one to receive holy communion under the two forms, it would take a very great quantity of wine to supply a large parish. In some places this might nowadays be easily procurable, but not so in the times before steamers and railways existed. Moreover, how would very

remote and out-of-the-way countries fare even now? Large consignments of wine could only reach them at the cost of great expenditure. In reading the accounts of the foreign missions, one finds the trouble of procuring even the quantity of wine necessary for the Holy Sacrifice frequently alluded to; the difficulty of transporting it hundreds of miles under the burning sun of South Africa being very great, indeed.

The second motive by which the Church was actuated was the desire to protect the Blessed Sacrament from profanation. If holy communion had to be given under two forms to all the faithful, the chalice would pass through the hands of all manner of people, including the very old who are often shaky, and who would be more likely to be so on so solemn an occasion; then, many people would be awkward and clumsy, and there would be the children. How easily the Precious Blood might be spilt on the ground, on the communion cloth, or on the clothes of the communicants! Indeed, it would be difficult to prevent accidents of this kind. How could the Blessed Sacrament be carried safely to the sick in the night when great haste has often to be made, over mountain and valley, snow and ice? The Church was fully alive to what she was doing when she set her seal to the custom of giving holy communion under one form only. In this way its reception has been made easier for the faithful, and the Blessed Sacrament has been protected from profanation.

The third reason for the action of the Church in this matter was to guard the purity of her

doctrine. As a matter of fact, those who objected to the giving of holy communion under one form were invariably promoters of heresy concerning the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, or they had heretical leanings, or were followers of such people. Against such as these the Church wished to declare expressly and emphatically that Christ is present, whole and entire, under each kind. On those subsequent occasions, when the Church particularly commanded Catholics to communicate under both forms, it was for the purpose of combating another form of heresy, but she, at the same time, specially declared and formulated that Christ was present, whole and entire, under each species.

Let us be content with what the Church has ordained. She gives us the entire sacrament though under one form only. Let us approach the Altar with faith, with contrition, with desire, so that we may obtain the full grace and fruit of our communions, and that they may be to us what Christ meant them to be—our food for eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXVII

On the Effects of Holy Communion

"My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (*John* vi. 56).

Now that we have seen what holy communion—spiritual as well as actual communion—is in itself, and have realized our strict obligation to receive Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, as well as the form under which we must receive Him, it is time to turn to the special graces which holy communion imparts to our soul. The graces which it confers upon us are without number, but in a special way it:

I. Unites us in the most intimate way with Jesus Christ.

II. It increases sanctifying grace.

III. It lessens our evil inclinations and inclines us to good.

IV. It cleanses us from venial sin and preserves us from mortal sin.

V. It is to us a pledge of our glorious resurrection and everlasting happiness.

We will consider these points one by one, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with as much devotion as possible, and in order that we may bring home more clearly to our minds the workings of holy communion in our soul we will compare them to the effects of our daily food upon the life of the body. It was with good

purpose that Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament under the familiar form of our ordinary nourishment—bread and wine; it was not without purpose that He said, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed"; He meant us to understand by this that the effects of holy communion on the life of our soul are the same as those exerted by our daily food on the life of the body.

I

Holy communion unites us in the most intimate way with Christ. This is clearly so if by holy communion we really receive the body and blood of Christ, for what is more part of us than the food which we eat? It is taken into our system and becomes changed into our very flesh and blood. Something similar, though not quite the same, happens when we receive Our Lord in holy communion. His body and blood are not, it is true, changed into the flesh and blood of the communicant; it is the communicant who becomes inwardly transformed into Christ. Our Saviour said: "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." By worthy communion Jesus Christ becomes within us the well-spring of our supernatural life, from which we can draw strength to live according to grace; humbly, patiently, obediently hidden with Christ, and striving to walk in His footsteps. The first effect of Holy Communion is to unite us intimately with Christ.

II

Holy Communion increases sanctifying grace in our soul. Every sacrament of the living effects

this. But, if it is true of them all, it is true in a deeper and wider sense of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, which may only be approached when the soul is already in a state of grace, and in which we receive the Son of the living God, the source of all grace, who comes to us for the express purpose of feeding and nourishing our souls.

What promotes the growth of the body more than the food which we eat? When children lose their appetite, and begin to take their food badly, they at once show signs of pining and drooping. The color in their cheeks fades and disappears; they no longer increase in size; in fact, not only does their development seem completely arrested, but they begin to lose ground. If, on the contrary, a child is able to take plenty of good, wholesome, nourishing food, it is a pleasure to see the way in which it progresses; how it grows and puts on weight; how all the powers of its body increase and gain strength; how, working or playing, sleeping and waking, it shows every sign of sound and vigorous health.

Oh, dearly beloved brethren, holy communion is the natural food of the soul. Whoever brings to this heavenly food real desire, whoever receives it worthily and often, can not fail to increase in sanctifying grace; our growth in the grace of God is not capable of being weighed and measured like our bodily growth, but we become sensible of it by an increase of virtue, an accession of faith, which go always hand in hand with the gift of sanctifying grace. A tree, while growing up tall and stately, puts out at the same time strong roots

under the ground; so the presence of sanctifying grace in the soul strengthens and increases faith —that foundation of all justification—for the Eucharist is essentially the sacrament of faith. Our hope that we may one day take our place at the banquet of eternal life becomes more vivid and more real from being admitted here below by holy communion to the table of the Lord; and, further, we advance in the divine virtue of charity. When two fires meet together they burn with a redoubled glow. In holy communion the strong fire of Christ's love for us mingles with the feeble flicker of our love for Him, and what is the result? Our love becomes stronger, more ardent, more intense, more sublime. The second effect of holy communion is to increase sanctifying grace in our soul.

III

Holy Communion lessens our evil tendencies and inclines us to good. What does a traveler do who, being obliged to make on foot a long and wearisome journey, finds that his strength of body is giving out, that he is getting tired, sleepy, foot-sore, or even that utter exhaustion is setting in, which makes it difficult for him to hold himself erect, much less to push ahead and cover long distances. The remedy is simple. If it is at all possible, he procures some good, strengthening food, and drinks a strong stimulant, and before long, refreshed and invigorated, he will be able to continue his journey with renewed zest and courage.

On the road of life is our soul not subject to

weakness and infirmities of all kinds? The inclination to evil is to a great extent born with us: "The imagination and thoughts of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," and, in part, also, our difficulties are the result of habits formed by repeated falls into sin. Who has not leanings to pride, and how common is the tendency to anger, to intemperance, to impurity! What a number of sins they lead to, how much lack of devotion, tepidity, indifference, coldness, they are accountable for. The saints themselves complained of the burden of their evil inclinations, which well-nigh weighed them down to the ground. "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind." Thousands and thousands of Christians are so completely fettered by the yoke and servitude of their own evil passions that they are not even conscious of their chains. Now what is the sovereign remedy by which these enemies of our soul may be, if not exterminated, at any rate, robbed of much of their power? It is holy communion. Receive it often and worthily and it will be to you indeed meat and drink. It will still the proud and angry movements of the heart, your vanity, your inclination to intemperance, making everything evil in your nature weaker and more easy to overcome. Your soul will be enabled to cultivate a fervent love for prayer and for the services of the Church, and your efforts at practising patience, self-denial, and charity to your neighbors will be attended with success. A new spring will dawn for you. The sun, as it grows in strength and power, transforms the ice into a soft, running stream,

warms the chill earth, dispels the fog, and drives away the clouds; it induces the tender seed to put forth shoots, so that every tree and bush becomes laden with bud and leaf and blossom. Holy communion has power to give birth in our hearts to just such a spring, rich in all good, and in the flowers of devotion as well as the fruits of true holiness. The third effect of holy communion, therefore, is to lessen our evil tendencies and incline us to good.

IV

The fourth effect of holy communion is to cleanse us from venial and preserve us from mortal sin. Our body is subject to trifling disorders, small blemishes, slight indispositions not of sufficient importance to call for medical aid or treatment. How can they be remedied? What they require is a special diet.

Holy communion, if received with a contrite heart, removes the effects of venial sin in the soul. This is of enormous advantage to us, for who knows the number of venial sins he commits of which he keeps no account at all; and of those of which we may be at the time fully conscious, how many afterward escape our memory altogether, which even our examination of conscience fails to bring back to mind; or, on the other hand, how often do we know them full well, but neglect to be sorry for them or to confess them. Sins of inattention, of distraction, of weakness, of impatience, vanity, carelessness, and such like, are as numerous as the grains of dust which adhere to the soles of our shoes as we walk, making them

soiled and earth-stained even though all our other garments may be clean and spotless. Is it not a great grace that by holy communion the soul may be in an instant freed from all this dust and stain?

But holy communion does more than this; it preserves us from mortal sin. Are we to understand by this that a Christian who receives holy communion frequently and worthily becomes incapable of mortal sin? No, certainly; it is still possible for him to fall into grievous sin, but when such a misfortune happens it is invariably the result of very violent temptation, or of some sudden and unforeseen occasion of sin coming upon him when he is off his guard. Death has power to lay hold of those who are well fed and well nourished. They may be pierced with a sword, or struck by a bullet or a thunderbolt; a heavy fall, or a stroke of apoplexy may kill them; but, nevertheless, judicious nourishment is a factor in prolonging life. If a man gives up eating and drinking, and for days and weeks abstains from taking nourishment, he will finally perish of hunger and exhaustion. Now holy communion is peculiarly calculated—and it is one of its special effects—to preserve us from grievously offending God; if we neglect to approach it, and put off doing so from year to year, we will unfailingly fall into mortal sin. Oh, marvelous, saving remedy! "This is the bread, that if any man eat of it, he may not die."

V

The final effect of holy communion consists in its being to us a pledge of our glorious resurrection and everlasting happiness.

The word "pledge" is used in several different connections, but it always represents something tendered as security. If a debtor wants to give his creditors a guarantee that what he owes them will be paid, he places in their hands something of equal or higher value than the amount of his debts, by means of which the sum could, if necessary, be recovered—a pledge of his good faith. Formerly, at the conclusion of any bargain or agreement, a small coin changed hands to show that such an agreement had really been entered upon; for instance, this was customary in engaging a servant, or a more familiar instance still is the shilling which used to be given in some countries to recruits on joining the army; once it had been accepted by them they were considered pledged to the colors.

May we not say in all truth that holy communion is a pledge of our glorious resurrection? For, what is it that we receive? The risen, living, glorious, and glorified body of the Lord. The sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Does this not give us security that our body will also one day rise gloriously to enjoy what has been promised us, namely, the contemplation of the divinity of Christ for all eternity? Is it not exactly as if He Himself said to us: "As truly as I now refresh you with my sacred humanity, so truly will I in the world to come bless you with the continuous enjoyment of My divinity."

Oh, wonderful fruits of holy communion! From what evils it shelters and protects us! What blessings it brings! What strength and consolation it gives to the soul! Viewed by its light, what

a glorious prospect death and eternity have to offer us! The enjoyment of this heavenly bread alone has power to give us happiness in this vale of tears, to strengthen our weakness, to make us patient under suffering, and fill us with joyful hope for the better things to come. "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

On Receiving Holy Communion Unworthily

"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 *Cor.* xi. 29).

The wonderful effects and precious fruits of holy communion which we contemplated in our last instruction are clearly only the result of good communions, and are in no way shared by those who receive Our Lord unworthily. It is, therefore, very important that we should know what constitutes an unworthy communion. The catechism asks: "What is necessary to make a good communion?" "To make a good communion it is necessary to be in a state of sanctifying grace and to be fasting from midnight." We must note that three things are necessary to make a communion bad: (1) The communicant must be in a state of mortal sin; (2) he must know that he is in a state of mortal sin; (3) knowing this he must receive holy communion. If one of these three conditions is wanting there can not possibly be any question of a bad communion; this, once clearly understood, solves and clears away many of the doubts and difficulties which crop up every now and then to trouble and worry good Christians. You have been to confession, but before going to holy communion you suddenly remember some venial sin which you have forgotten to confess, and for which you have not had contrition; or it may be you have confessed it, but before

communion you commit it again. Is your communion a bad one, if under these circumstances you approach Our Lord's table? No, you are not in a state of mortal sin. Or, again, you have made your confession, but before communion, perhaps just as you are going up to the altar, you recollect that in confession you perhaps became confused, but any way one or more mortal sins managed to escape your memory. Is your communion a bad one if you communicate in this condition? No. Why not? Because you are not in a state of mortal sin at all; the sins which were forgotten in your confusion were, nevertheless, absolved with the rest, and there remains only the obligation to mention them next time you go to confession. But, wilfully to conceal a mortal sin in confession, or to receive the Blessed Sacrament knowing that after receiving absolution you have again sinned mortally, is to make a bad communion. This is:

I. A terrible sin.
II. One which merits terrible punishment.

I

To communicate unworthily is a great sin, a terrible sacrilege. This is the simple truth. Sacrilege is defined as the profanation of holy persons, places, or things. In holy communion we receive the body and blood of Christ. In the whole of heaven and earth there is no material thing more intimately connected with or more exclusively consecrated to the Godhead than the body which Christ the Son of God assumed here below, with which He lived and died, to which He is

united for all eternity sitting at the right hand of God, and clothed in which He will appear when He comes to judge the living and the dead. Is the blood of Christ not consecrated to God? Shall we not, then, consider it a most terrible sacrilege for a man, knowing himself to be guilty of mortal sin, to eat this flesh and drink this blood, thus profaning a sacrament instituted and destined for those only who are in a state of grace and children of God, so dragging our Saviour, whose joy it is to give Himself to the pure, through the mire of a sinful and unclean heart?

Clearly, a bad communion is a sacrilege, for it is the profanation of what is consecrated to God. It profanes not only what is consecrated to God, but the Son of God Himself, for the divinity as well as the humanity of Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament. In order to realize what a terrible crime we are guilty of when we make a bad communion, let us compare this act with that other terrible sacrilege which every Christian stigmatizes without hesitation, as the most terrible sacrilege of all time, namely, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Considered dispassionately, to whom do you think the greater odium ought to attach, to the Jews who put the Saviour to death, or to you who receive Him unworthily in holy communion? The Jews did not know that He was the Son of God, at least they did not believe it; had they believed in Him they would never have condemned the Author of Life to the Cross. But you believe in Him and yet you crucify Him. Which, then, is guilty of the greater crime? The Pharisees, who were the chief instigators in pro-

curing His condemnation, had reason to owe Him a grudge, for He had blamed and accused them and shown up their hypocrisy, describing them as whited sepulchers. They wanted to be revenged. But, has our Saviour ever done you any harm? Has He ever denounced or accused you or turned away from you? On the contrary, when you accuse yourself He forgives you, and instead of repulsing you He loads you with favors. Yet your treatment of Him is no better than that which He met with at the hands of the blood-thirsty Jews. Among the crowds which hounded down our Saviour, one feels sure that the blind to whom He had given their sight, the lepers He had cleansed, the dead He had raised up, found no place; at all events, they certainly did not join in the tumult against Him. But you, to whom He has given the light of faith, whom He has cleansed from the leprosy of sin, whom He has rescued from eternal death, you I say are to be found in the ranks of those who dishonor Him by their unworthy communions. Who, then, do you think, are the more ungrateful, the Jews or those Christians who so profane His sacred body and blood? One might go on multiplying reasons in palliation of the crime committed by the Jews, while, at the same time, placing the unworthy communicant in an increasingly unfavorable light. The Jews outraged our Saviour, they crucified His sacred body and shed His precious blood, but it was while He was still liable to suffering and death; moreover, although they dishonored Him, many causes operated at the same time to give Him glory; for instance, during His passion the

sun became darkened, the earth trembled, graves opened and gave up their dead, the pagan centurion acknowledged Him as God, the good thief adored Him. But, by an unworthy communion, the body and blood and humanity of Christ is outraged in its immortal and glorified state, and under circumstances which admit of no corresponding glory to make good and atone for the insult offered Him.

We can realize the guilt of a sacrilegious communion even better still if we compare it with the sin which Judas committed when he received holy communion at the last supper, afterward going out and delivering his Master into the hands of His enemies. There are many striking points of resemblance. First of all, our Saviour warned Judas repeatedly and earnestly against the crime he was going to perpetrate: "One of you shall betray Me." "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him if that man had not been born." How serious a warning! Do you think that any one goes to the Lord's table for the first time in a state of mortal sin without his conscience pricking him? No; he, too, is warned. His beating heart seems to say to him: "What are you doing? What sin are you committing? Think of the outrage, the punishment!"

Judas concealed his treachery under the cloak of friendship and love: "Hail, Rabbi!" He greeted his Master, embracing and kissing Him, and the appearance of devotion and attachment which he gave to his action made his betrayal all the more mean and shameful. Does the man

who makes a bad communion not do the same? He folds his hands, he lowers his eyes, he kneels down, giving every indication of devotion, humility, adoration. But what purpose does this outward pretense serve except to cloak the most base of outrages? Our Saviour is forced to enter a soul, which, instead of being the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost, is the dwelling-place of sin, and of the evil spirit.

Once Judas had accomplished his villainy he no longer recoiled from any sin however great. Despair, self-destruction, damnation were the unholy steps which led him on, plunging him deeper and deeper into the waters of destruction. The same thing follows upon a bad communion. And this brings us to the consequences of an unworthy communion, which is our second point of meditation.

II

The consequences of a bad communion are as terrible as the fruits of a good communion are beautiful and salutary. One can only say that the effects of the former are exactly the opposite of those of the latter. Let us again consider one by one the graces produced in our soul by a good communion and contrast them with the evil wrought by receiving our Saviour unworthily. Worthy communion unites us most intimately with Christ; by unworthy communion we separate ourselves in the widest possible manner from Him. Worthy communion increases sanctifying grace in our soul; unworthy communion devastates, still more completely than mortal sin had

done, the temple of God, deepening, widening, and confirming the evil in which the soul is already plunged. Worthy communion lessens our evil tendencies, while unworthy communion but serves to give them a still freer rein. Worthy communion cleanses us from venial sin, and preserves us from mortal sin; but an unworthy communion has power neither to purify nor to protect; it is in itself a mortal sin, and the beginning of many others. Worthy communion is a pledge of our glorious resurrection and eternal blessedness; of what can an unworthy communion be a pledge? If it be the pledge of anything, it must be that of eternal damnation: "Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."

It often happens that spiritual blindness and hardness of heart follow an unworthy communion. A man who is surrounded on every side with light, but who on account of the very clearness and brilliancy of this light is unable to see, may be described as having his eyes blinded. So it is with the soul after an unworthy communion. His crime stares him in the face; yet he is unable to see it and takes no account of it. Then his heart becomes hardened; he repeats his sacrilege two, three, four, who can say how many times, and is in no way sensible of what he is doing. He has grown insensible, and the consequences of such a state may be imagined.

Is the sin of receiving Our Lord unworthily

one which can never be forgiven? Certainly it can be forgiven. The sinner has but to repent, to confess his sin, and to do penance, but he does not do it, and it is this that constitutes the difficulty. Oh, dearly beloved brethren, if there be any one among us who knows himself to be guilty of this terrible sacrilege, let him not follow the path of Judas, but let him at once return to the Saviour, who is merciful enough to forgive every offence, even those aimed at His own sacred body and blood, even those offered in return for the greatest proof of His love for us. Let us turn again to our Saviour, and by a worthy communion repair the evil we have done. Those amongst us who have no wrong of this kind to make good will endeavor, by receiving Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament frequently and worthily, to make Him some return of honor and glory for the humility with which He abases Himself for our sake in the Blessed Sacrament. "Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." Amen.

SERMON XXIX

On Preparation for Holy Communion

"Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice" (1 *Cor.* xi. 28).

The glorious effects of worthy communion on the one hand, and the terrible consequences of the crime of an unworthy communion on the other, should incite us to make as good a preparation as ever we can for receiving Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. The apostle St. Paul exhorts us to do so when he says: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice."

To-day, therefore, we will devote our instruction to the question of how to prepare for holy communion. Two kinds of preparation are necessary, preparation of the soul, and preparation of the body. To-day we will deal only with the preparation of the soul; this consists:

I. In removing certain things *from* the soul.
II. In introducing certain things *into* the soul.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will briefly consider these two points.

I

The preparation of the soul consists primarily in removing certain things from it. We must free it from sin and, above all, from mortal sin. What do we do when we are expecting to receive a guest of very high degree into our house? We first

give the whole place a thorough overhauling; we clean the pavement in front of the entrance, the hall-door steps, the hall, the apartments which our guest is to occupy, even those which he might chance to enter, or which might in any way come under his notice; floors, walls, windows, hangings, and furniture are all subjected to a thorough process of renovation. Indeed, it would show a want of proper consideration and respect for an exalted guest to invite him to a house covered with dust and dirt.

In holy communion is not our Saviour a high and exalted guest? He is one of such purity that the angels themselves are not pure in His sight; lover of purity as He is, all the foulness of the streets is not so hideous and abominable in His eyes as the stains of mortal sin upon the soul. Therefore, before holy communion, these must be removed completely and thoroughly. By what means? A recognized means is prescribed for us. Whoever is in a state of mortal sin must make a good and valid confession before receiving holy communion. Therefore, after mortal sin, the only way to a good communion is through the confessional. "That is just it," many of you will probably think; "I should go much oftener to holy communion were it not for confession, which is so worrying, so shameful, so humiliating." Now can this possibly be a satisfactory reason for staying away from holy communion? On the contrary, we should rejoice to possess so sure a means of purifying our soul, and giving it the luster, so to speak, necessary for receiving holy communion. We should be glad to have the opportunity of

humbling ourselves in the confessional for the love of Him who has lowered Himself for us to the form of bread and wine. We should thank God a thousand times for having instituted for us sinners, not only the sacrament of His love, but that other sacrament by which we may recover when we have lost it the purity and innocence necessary for the reception of the body and blood of Christ.

We should not rest content with cleansing our soul from mortal sin; we should also be concerned to remove all traces of venial sin. Why should we do this? Does venial sin make our communions unworthy? Not at all; but the catechism tells us: "To receive plentifully the graces of holy communion, it is not enough to be free from mortal sin." Light is reflected from the surface of muddy water, but it does not pierce and penetrate its depths. Daylight is admitted through dirty, dusty windows, but not in the same abundance as through panes freshly cleaned and polished. The presence of venial sin in the soul does not make our communions unworthy, but it prevents us from receiving the full measure of the rich graces which can only be given to those who are entirely pure.

Our Saviour Himself taught and impressed upon us that we should endeavor to purify our souls from the stains of venial sin. Immediately before He instituted the Blessed Sacrament He washed the feet of His apostles with His own hands, saying: "He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly." This action was typical and full of meaning. The dust

on the feet of the apostles represents venial sin. In the East men go either barefooted or they wear only sandals; therefore, even when freshly-bathed and attired in their best and most festive garments, they present themselves at a great banquet, there still adheres to their feet a certain amount of the dust of the road: "He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet." What did our Saviour wish to illustrate? That even those souls, which have been washed clean from all their iniquities in the sacrament of Penance, have still need to be purified from their venial sins; for venial sins accumulate, just as the dust of the road clings to unshod feet, in the course of our relations with our fellow-men, in the comings and goings of our life here below, out of the weakness, forgetfulness, and the instability of our human nature, to dim the freshness and purity of the soul. Our Saviour washed the feet of the disciples before instituting the Blessed Eucharist, before dispensing it, before it was received for the first time, to teach us how we should cleanse our souls from venial sin before approaching holy communion.

How is this to be done? No doubt the sacrament of Penance is the direct means; but venial sins are committed so easily, almost unconsciously, that one is very likely to forget them in confession. We have yet another means of washing this dust from our soul. Let us endeavor before holy communion to awaken in our hearts perfect contrition. In every prayer-book, in the preparation for holy communion, we shall find prayers for rousing our hearts to these sentiments:

"Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins."

II

So much for what has regard to the actual cleansing of our soul; but, as the catechism says, "It is not enough to be free from mortal sin"; we must introduce something into our soul—our soul must be adorned and beautified—to fit it for the reception of our divine guest. When there is going to be a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament, do we not decorate the church with carpets, flowers, and lights; and in countries where Our Lord is actually carried through the streets, the people vie with one another in adorning the houses before which He will have to pass; altars are erected, and music and singing and the sweet sound of bells fill the air. Nothing is too good or too costly, no trouble is spared to beautify the places which are to be honored by the presence of our Saviour.

If, therefore, we see that it is right and fitting to decorate places honored even in the most passing way by our Saviour's presence, how much more shall we wish to make beautiful the dwelling-place of our soul, in which He intends to rest and remain for a time! Oh, assuredly, we must do more than merely purify our soul! The catechism tells us in addition to "make acts of lively faith, firm hope, and ardent love."

Now you will naturally ask how one may attain to making such acts of virtue as these. No doubt such sentiments of faith, hope, and charity are the best preparation for holy communion, and

beautify the soul more than gold or precious stones, but the question is how may one succeed in making them. I will give you one or two short methods.

First Method.—Say the prayers before holy communion which are to be found in any prayer-book, but say them in such a way as to realize their meaning, and, further, to feel in your heart what you are saying, so that you may be able to address to our Saviour in truth the words which you are reading. Mere printed words are dead and empty unless the devotion of your heart gives them sense and meaning.

Second Method.—Contemplate the virtues of which Our Lord sets us an example in the Blessed Sacrament, and try to imitate Him. What special virtues does He show us there? The humility of self-effacement; the obedience with which at the word of the priest He becomes present under the form of bread; the gentleness and patience with which He silently accepts the want of reverence; the indifference, the insults, the sacrileges of men; the mercy with which He dispenses all the works of mercy, feeding the hungry with His flesh, and giving the thirsty to drink of His precious blood, clothing the naked with His grace, harboring the homeless in His own house, visiting the sick with His divine consolations. Our Saviour offers us also the most sublime example of perseverance by remaining as He does from year to year, from century to century in the Blessed Sacrament. As we contemplate our divine Lord in the tabernacle we can not fail to be penetrated with a sense of these virtues, and it is impossible to receive Him

into our hearts without trying to imitate Him in some degree.

Third Method.—Repeat three times with devotion the words which the priest says immediately before he administers holy communion: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed." In the instruction on spiritual communion I have already advised you to accentuate and consider the first time the word "Lord." This title addressed to our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament constitutes in itself an act of faith, and it is but a short step from faith to adoration. He would be a devil indeed, who, believing in the real presence, refused to adore the Blessed Sacrament. The second time you repeat the prayer dwell specially on the words, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof;" here we express both humility and contrition. We are humbled by the thought of our own sinfulness in the presence of the Son of God who is coming to us, and this humility is the twin sister of contrition. The third time pray with special stress on the words: "But say only the word and my soul shall be healed." These words contain both the desire and the hope that our sick soul may be cured of its infirmities and will move us to love for the merciful physician who cures us by the application of His own precious body and blood.

Last Method.—Let us think when we are going to communion that it is the Holy Viaticum we are receiving. The day of our last communion will surely dawn; let us imagine ourselves receiving it in full possession of our senses, our soul flooded

and overwhelmed with devotion, as our dying lips repeat: "Lord, I believe in Thee, and will believe in Thee, till I meet Thee face to face; lying here on my death-bed I adore Thee; soon I shall be joining in the adoration of the angels." A dying man is no more than a handful of clay, a prisoner about to be brought up before the bar of God's justice. With what feelings of humility and contrition will he not receive Holy Viaticum! The thought that the same Saviour who gives Himself to him in holy communion will also be his judge fills his heart with hope; the consciousness that this world is passing away like a shadow, and the realization of the emptiness of all that he has loved here on earth, make him turn with love to what awaits him: "Thee will I love eternally and with my whole heart; come, O Lord Jesus, come; fulfil in me Thy words: 'I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be.'"

SERMON XXX

On the Preparation of the Body Necessary for Holy Communion

"Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice" (1 *Cor.* xi. 28).

A TWO-FOLD preparation is necessary for holy communion—that of the soul, and that of the body. The preparation of the soul consists of two parts, cleansing it from sin, and adorning it with virtues.

Having reached this point in our consideration last Sunday we will now pass on to see what bodily preparation is necessary for holy communion.

I. We must be suitably dressed.
II. We must approach the altar reverently.
III. We must be fasting.

We will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, devote our instruction to these three points.

I

First, we will say a few words about our dress when we go to holy communion. We should be decently dressed. By thinking over what it is we actually do when we go to holy communion, we can frame rules which will help us to regulate even this point for ourselves. When we go to holy communion we receive the body of Christ whole and entire and indivisible; our dress, therefore, should be at least whole, not torn and slovenly. We receive the most pure body of Christ; therefore it

should be clean; we must be careful that it in no way offends against the laws of modesty, for what could be more unfitting and unsuitable than to appear at this sacred banquet indecently attired? We need not accentuate this point further. Rich and costly dress is, indeed, not required; our Saviour comes to us in the most lowly guise; and the most needy amongst us have no reason to be ashamed of our appearance, however poor and humble it may be.

II

It is important to say something on the manner in which we should go up to the altar for holy communion; we should approach the altar with great reverence, our hands joined, and our eyes cast down.

We have already spoken of how we may adorn the soul by acts of virtue before holy communion. Now, if these virtues be really present in the soul they will be apparent in our outward demeanor; faith and adoration will show themselves by reverent behavior; devotion by joined hands, humility by lowered eyes.

When we kneel down at the communion rails we should place our hands under the communion cloth in such a way as to hold it under our chin, but a little distance below. The communion cloth is not placed there merely for ornament; it is meant to serve a practical purpose. Should it happen through the awkwardness, either of the priest or of the communicant, that by accident the Sacred Host should fall, then the communion cloth would receive it, and prevent it dropping to the

ground. But unless we hold the communion cloth quite straight this will not be effected.

At the time of receiving the sacred host we should hold our head erect and steady, for the priest can not see the mouth of the communicant if the head is kept bent down. The eyes should be shut, and the mouth opened wide enough to allow the priest to place the sacred host upon the tongue. The communicant should extend the tongue in such a way as to allow it to lie flat upon the lower lip, and above all he must be careful not to curl his tongue or point it, or stretch it out too far; then when the priest has placed the sacred host upon it, let it be drawn back quietly and slowly and the mouth closed, without haste or agitation.

If inwardly we are unable to attain to that degree of fervor which we would wish to possess let us at least try to glorify God, edify our neighbor, and increase our own devotion by strictly observing the rules of outward reverence. For it is a fact that while inward devotion shows itself by outward reverence, to observe outward reverence increases the feeling of inward devotion. A fire, we know, creates a draught; at the same time the draught increases the strength of the fire.

III

Now we come to our third point in connection with the bodily preparation we must make for holy communion. The catechism says, "it is necessary to be fasting from midnight." This means that we must not have taken the least thing in the way of food and drink, not even a few drops of

medicine or of water; if we have done so, then, we are no longer strictly fasting and can not receive holy communion. From midnight, therefore, we must have abstained from everything in the way of food and drink. It does not matter what we have eaten or drunk, whether it was much or little, whether we took it intentionally or by accident; whether we really required it or whether we did not it is all the same; if since midnight we have taken the smallest thing to eat or to drink we are no longer fasting, and no one who is not fasting is allowed to receive holy communion. This is the strict and universal law of the Church, and neither confessor, parish priest, nor bishop, under ordinary circumstances, has power to dispense us from it.

You may object that our Saviour Himself gave holy communion with His own hand to the apostles after they had eaten the paschal lamb. But this proves nothing. Surely He who was the author of the sacrament had a right to administer it in whatever way seemed to Him best; moreover, there was more than one reason why our Saviour should give holy communion to the apostles although they had broken their fast. First of all, the pasch which He ate with them was a figure of the Blessed Sacrament, and it was right that the substance should follow as closely as possible upon the shadow. The pasch was, moreover, a type of His passion; for this reason He ate it on the evening before He suffered, instituting the Blessed Sacrament, the memorial of His death, immediately afterward. Our Saviour, therefore, had weighty reasons, which in our case do not

exist, for administering the Blessed Sacrament in the evening to persons who were not fasting. We, on the contrary, have good reasons for receiving holy communion only when we are in a fasting state. St. Augustine says: "It has pleased the Holy Ghost that, to honor so great a sacrament, the body of Christ should be received into the mouth of a Christian before any other food;" and the holy Doctor goes on to tell us that this custom has been universally observed all the world over. The fact that such was the universal custom at the time of St. Augustine proves that when at the Council of Constance the Church expressly laid down that holy communion was to be received only when fasting, it was merely making a law of what had always been the natural instinct of pious Christians, and a custom universally observed for centuries.

Whenever the Church sees sufficient reason for doing so she dispenses her children from this law of receiving holy communion fasting. The catechism says: "Is any one ever allowed to receive holy communion when not fasting?" And it answers: "Any one in danger of death is allowed to receive holy communion when not fasting." Therefore, who is allowed to receive holy communion without being in a state of fasting? Those who are dangerously ill. But whom would we call dangerously ill? All those who are ill enough to be in bed? or only those who are dying, or who are certain to die? No; any of these definitions is far too narrow; any one suffering from a dangerous illness of any kind may receive holy communion without fasting. The doctor, and in

many cases the confessor, can be the judge; the sick person generally knows himself if he is very ill, but in case of doubt it is always well to be on the safe side, and take the course which is the best and the most salutary for the patient. In cases, therefore, of serious illness, we may receive holy communion without fasting not only once but repeatedly, and as long as our illness lasts. Under these circumstances holy communion is given as Viaticum. What is the difference between holy communion and Viaticum? There is substantially no difference. Holy communion is generally given in a church, and in the forenoon; Viaticum is brought to the house of the sick person, and is given at any hour. In dispensing holy communion the priest says: "May the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting." In giving the Holy Viaticum he says: "Receive, brother, the Viaticum of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may preserve thee from the malignant enemy and bring thee to life everlasting." The name of "Viaticum" given to holy communion in this form has reference to the condition in which he who receives it finds himself; he is likely to be called upon to undertake a long journey, to take farewell of his body, and all that belongs to him; to leave friends and enemies, joys and sorrows, all his goods and chattels and the whole world, and to pass away to a distant and unknown land. This is a great and important step. I remember as a boy once seeing a whole family, about to emigrate, in the act of piling up their household goods upon a cart preparatory to starting on their voyage. When the cart was loaded and every one ready to

start the mother ran back to look once more at the empty house where she had lived so long, and where her children were born. She wept in a most heart-broken way, for she knew what she was leaving, but what the future might have in store for her she could not say. The journey from time to eternity has yet greater terrors; for this reason the Church is concerned to ensure that the sick person receives in good time the food that will strengthen and console him, and fill him with courage and hope for eternal life. The prophet Elias, tired and weary of life, had lain down in the desert under a tree to sleep; but as soon as he had eaten the bread provided for him by the goodness of God he rose up and traveled forty days and forty nights until he arrived at the Holy Mount, where he was allowed to see God and hold intercourse with Him. When a dying man receives Holy Viaticum, he is strengthened to pass over to the other world, and to go on further and further till he reaches the Holy Mount, where God's countenance will be revealed to him. So much importance does the Church attach to the reception of the Holy Viaticum that she unhesitatingly gives it to her children, even when they are unable to fulfil her law of receiving the body of Christ in a state of fast. Amen.

SERMON XXXI

On Thanksgiving After Communion

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?" (*Ps.* cxv. 12).

We will conclude our instructions on holy communion and on the Blessed Sacrament by considering to-day, with the help of the Holy Ghost, what we must do after receiving holy communion. The author of the Imitation of Christ says: "Neither is careful guarding of thyself less required afterward, than a devout preparation beforehand."

We will divide what we must do after holy communion into two parts, namely:

I. What we ought to do immediately after communion.

II. What we ought to do in the course of a communion day.

I

The catechism asks: "What should we do after holy communion?" And answers: "After holy communion we should spend some time in adoring Our Lord, in thanking Him for the graces we have received, and in asking Him for the blessings we need."

What would a guest think who, invited by us in the most cordial manner, and received with every mark of respect, was to find himself, as soon as he had passed our threshold, forsaken and left

alone? Would he not look upon such treatment as great rudeness, a want of proper consideration, perhaps even as a direct insult? What, then, can our divine Saviour think of those Christians who, immediately after they have received Him into their hearts, rise up and leave, not only the communion rail, but the church, putting away every thought and feeling of devotion as though it were forbidden to hold intercourse of any kind with their divine guest? Can we wonder that so many communions are, I will not say unworthy, but at any rate, without profit or fruit?

How long a time should we spend in devotion after holy communion? I can not tell you, and the Church has not determined any particular length of time. It depends on the measure of our love and fervor, and, I may add, upon the conditions of our domestic circumstances. The mother of a family who has a number of children, and a great deal to do awaiting her at home, an official or employee of any kind who is obliged to be at his post by a certain hour, would be obliged to interrupt his devotions sooner than those who are free to dispose of their time as they please. But a short quarter of an hour is surely the least that any one will spend in prayer before they close their heart again to their divine guest. You will understand that this is not asking too much, when we consider all that we have to do in this short space of time.

(a) We must adore our Saviour; this should be our first act. The first duty of a host in receiving a guest in his house is to greet him according to his rank and condition. When the kings of the

East visited our Saviour the Scripture tells us that, "falling down, they adored Him." Before they spoke a word, before even opening up their rich treasures, they fell down and adored Him. To all appearances, they had before them nothing but a feeble child; the stable in which they found Him was hardly a fit resort for kings; and yet, "falling down, they adored Him." What shall we do, who do not even seek out our Saviour, but who are sought out by Him; to whom He comes and unites Himself in the closest manner, entering into the house of our soul, our very heart; dwelling with us as in a temple of peace, making us a resting-place, as it were, for His feet? St. Elizabeth cried out when our Lady visited her: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me." We, too, on receiving our Saviour into our heart, exclaim: "Whence is this to me that I, a poor sinner, should receive the honor and the grace of having in my house Jesus Christ, the king of heaven, creator and redeemer of the world, and judge of all mankind.

(b) We must thank Our Lord. Thanksgiving comprises everything that is due from us to our Saviour after holy communion. Thanks are rendered in return for favors received to Him from whom we have received them—our benefactor. Does Our Lord do us no favor by coming to us in holy communion? He does us the very greatest of all favors; a favor so great that none greater can be imagined or conceived, so great that the whole of our communion day, the whole of our life, the whole of eternity would not suffice to express our gratitude to Him. For this

reason, the Church directs us to call upon all the saints in heaven, on all mankind, and upon all creatures to join with us and help us to render our thanks. What moment should we choose to give expression to these feelings? There is no better or more suitable time than the first moments after holy communion. Our heart is most full of gratitude while the greatness of the benefit is still fresh in our minds, and we are enjoying the society of our benefactor Himself. Let us, therefore, say with the Blessed Mother of God: "My soul has magnified the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and Holy is His name." Let us cry out with the Psalmist: "Blessed be the name of the Lord; from this time forth for evermore."

(c) Words are but a feeble means of expressing gratitude. A great favor of any kind demands a return. We feel with the Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has rendered to me?" What can we give, we who are so poor, that bears any proportion to His benefits? If we have nothing worthy of Him, let us at least offer Him all that we have. Let us say to Him who has given Himself to us: "Lord, I want to be wholly Thine." Promise to belong to Him with all the powers of your soul and body, in life and death and for eternity. Consecrate to Him, first of all, the moments immediately after holy communion and say: "Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth! All that you tell me I will do!" On the day of your communion undertake to perform for love of our Saviour some partic-

ular and definite good work, an alms, an act of self-denial, to spend a certain time in prayer; promise Him that before long you will once more appear at His sacred table. Friends who love each other never part without arranging when and how they will meet again.

(d) We must conclude our thanksgiving by "asking our Saviour for the blessings we need," for He is never more inclined to grant our petitions than when, as our guest, He comes to visit our souls. Can He deny us anything when He has given us Himself? Surely when He has granted the greater He will concede the lesser. How foolish those Christians are who neglect to take advantage of those precious moments after holy communion, when one may almost say they are sure to obtain all they ask: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "Open thy heart to Me; I will grant all its desires."

We need to pray for many graces. If we look into ourselves what blindness, doubt, and darkness do we not find! How weak we are! Pray, then, for light and strength. Outside us are the allurements of the flesh, bad example and occasions of sin, the temptations of the spirit of evil; ask for grace to be ever on your guard. Around us are our parents, children, friends, and relations, our enemies, even, to be remembered; as well as the Pope, the bishops, and all the priests and pastors of the Church. Commend them all to the merciful Heart of your divine guest. Beneath us are the unbelievers, to whom the light of faith is denied; pray for their conversion; then, too, there are the suffering souls in purgatory,

whom you can release by your prayers. Above you is heaven, which of your own strength you are unable to reach, the crown which without help you have no power to grasp, the wedding-feast of eternity to which your own unaided efforts will never admit you. Oh, pray with all your heart to the Saviour to visit you again and again with His grace, and to bring you at last at the hour of death to the land of eternal life!

Speak to Him the words of Jacob: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." If in this way we adore God and pray to Him, thanking Him, offering ourselves to Him, and asking Him for all we need, the time after holy communion will not hang heavy on our hands, but will seem to us to be only too short.

II

How should we spend the day of our communion? If, as happens to some, we can not communicate very frequently, it is good to make a difference between communion days and ordinary days. It will, consequently, be well to spend our communion day as much as possible in pious exercises and to avoid worldly recreations and amusements.

We see, therefore, that on the day of holy communion there are (1) things we should do and (2) things we should avoid.

What should we do? We should, as much as possible, give ourselves up to pious exercises. In order to be brief, I will merely enumerate a few such exercises of piety: Attending Benediction or any evening service; visiting the sick, or the

poor; saying the rosary; reading a pious book. There are so many such exercises that each one can find something suitable for himself; we may take our choice.

On our communion day it is good to avoid worldly pleasures and amusements, for even when they are of a quite legitimate character they prevent the exercise of works of piety, and rob the soul of the sweet perfume of devotion which pervades it. As for amusements of an unbecoming or immoral nature they are as entirely at variance with the solemnity of a communion day as fire is opposed to water, or light to darkness. Would you make promises in the morning only to break them before nightfall? Would you be a guest at the sacred banquet in the morning and in the evening appear in some place of dissipation? Would you begin the day by enjoying and relishing the food of angels only to end it in the public house? Would you spend the morning in the society of the Lord God and in the evening consort with licentious companions? Are such things fitting? Are they possible? Can they be allowed? To give one's self up in the evening to pleasures of such a nature that the very thought of them dare not enter our minds in the morning! I do not want to pursue the subject further. It speaks too eloquently for itself.

Let us use the time after holy communion and the whole of our communion day in such a way as to preserve and strengthen the grace we have received. If we are debarred from more frequent participation such days will be in our life what the stars at night are in the heavens; points of

light in the darkness by which we come to estimate the greatness, the goodness, the majesty of God. Love will radiate from them to illumine our life, and one communion will but prepare us for another, each marking a fresh step on the road of virtue and of perfection, and bringing us nearer to eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXXII

On the Sacrament of Penance

"Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven" (*John* xx. 23).

TAKING the sacraments in their order we now come to the sacrament of Penance. It might be expected that a Christian who had in Baptism received sanctifying grace and in whom it had been confirmed and increased by Confirmation and by the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, would be enabled to persevere to the end through all the temptations of life. This was the view taken by a certain savage who had been instructed, converted, and baptized by a missionary priest and strengthened by receiving holy communion. Several years later this missionary found himself once more in the same country, and the converted savage presented himself and asked for holy communion. "Certainly, my son," replied the priest, "but you must first go to confession." Astonished, the man replied: "How could I possibly sin against my Saviour and Redeemer who died for me upon the cross, and who has given me His body and blood? I have never offended Him and never will." If we all shared the views of this zealous convert and acted as he did, then there would be no need either for the sacrament of Penance or for these instructions concerning it.

But our Saviour foresaw that the greater number of those who have been baptized would, in

spite of the graces they have received, fall through weakness into fresh sins, and offend Him perhaps even mortally. Our Saviour not only foresaw our weakness, but He had pity on it, and in His mercy provided us with a further means of salvation in the sacrament of Penance. St. Jerome calls it the second plank after the shipwreck. When a ship goes down those on board try to save themselves by clinging to a spar or splinter of the lost vessel; should this be swept away from them by the power of the waves they are very fortunate indeed if they can succeed in laying hold of another one. Baptism is for us Christians the first plank of salvation; in the sacrament of Penance our Saviour in His mercy offers us a second one to save us, if after Baptism we have fallen into grievous sin.

The Church, speaking at the Council of Trent, specially admonishes priests and pastors to be assiduous in expounding this sacrament to the faithful, first, because penance is essential for all who have committed mortal sin; next, because it is a sacrament to which we so frequently have recourse; finally, because its validity depends entirely on how the receiver of it acquits himself of his part in the rite. Therefore, if priests are to take special pains to instruct the faithful carefully concerning it, the faithful on their side must do their utmost to listen attentively to the instructions given, and to impress them on their memory.

In considering the sacrament of Penance I intend to lay special stress on those points which are of the greatest importance for the penitent. Before beginning, I should like to remind you of

one or two things, with which most of you are already familiar. Who instituted the Sacrament of Penance? Jesus Christ. When? After the resurrection. Where? In the chamber at Jerusalem. In what words? "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins you shall retain they are retained." To whom were these words addressed? To the apostles. What did they give them power to do? To remit and retain sins. To whom has this power been passed on from the apostles? To their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church. These are all recognized truths. We will now consider a little more closely the operation of the sacrament of Penance. It is a revelation:

I. Of the divine omnipotence.
II. Of the divine mercy.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will examine briefly the truth of these two propositions.

I

The sacrament of Penance is a revelation of the divine omnipotence; for, what takes place in confession? The first and most notable result is the remission of venial and mortal sin. There is no sin which the sacrament of Penance has not power to wash away: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow"; they will be so completely wiped out that for all eternity they will never rise up against us. This is no slight work. It is true that in many cases it seems easier to destroy than to build up; hundreds of hands are required to work for years in building up a great cathedral, for instance; whereas, an

earthquake can reduce it to ruins in a few moments. But, as regards sin, it is the other way round. A moment, a thought, a word, a look, a movement of the hand suffices for the commission of a sin; the dividing wall between God and man is erected. Who can obliterate the sin, and take down the wall? The hand of the sinner? No. Is it in the power of those who are mighty in wielding the sword or the pen? They are not able to remit the least sin committed by the smallest child. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" "I am He," said the Lord in the Old Testament, "that blots out thy iniquities for My own sake."

It appears to us a very easy matter to forgive sin, when we see that in the sacrament of Penance the priest in a few moments, with a few words, by the mere breath of his lips, has power to wipe it out and destroy it. This is true, but the more quickly and easily it is done, the greater the power which was required to produce the effect. When we see a freight-train, with heavily laden cars which hundreds of men together would find it impossible to move, traveling along the rails with ease and rapidity, we know that it has required a great and not a slight force to set it in motion.

How great, then, must be the power behind the words of absolution, which can thus accomplish what no power on earth, and not all the spirits in heaven are able to effect!

The power of God was necessary to construct hell, and to light the infernal fires, which are to burn for all eternity; it was also by the divine power that the fallen angels were cast into hell,

where they will remain forever. But hell does not blot out, it only punishes sin. The sacrament of Penance blots out sin. It is thus a greater manifestation of the power of God; for this reason, the penitent, in acknowledging his sinfulness, is taught to say: "I confess to God, the Father Almighty"; and the Church prays: "O God, who most greatly showeth Thy power, in that Thou cleanseth and dealeth mercifully."

II

The sacrament of Penance is a manifestation not only of God's omnipotence, but of His mercy.

Even before we set foot in the confessional God showed us mercy by withholding punishment from us. He is powerful enough to visit each sin with immediate punishment, as He did in the case of the fallen angels, and, though terrible for the sinner, it would be just and even wholesome and salutary for others if He were to do so. If a grievous sin were to be followed at once by death and damnation, what a lesson that would convey! Many a grievous sin would be prevented, numbers of people would never sin grievously at all; and those who were lost would only have committed one grievous sin. Oh, how great is the infinite mercy of God who delays the punishment in order to give us time and opportunity for repentance!

If it is merciful to delay punishing the sinner it is still more merciful to forgive the sin altogether.

Consider how quickly this forgiveness is obtained. Hardly has the sinner confessed his sin

than he hears the words, "I absolve thee," and he is free. Hardly had the repentant thief said: "Lord, remember me," than our Saviour answered, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Consider, further, how completely the sin is blotted out. Holy Scripture makes use of most powerful and effective imagery: "He will put away our iniquities and He will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea." What is deeper or more hidden than the bottom of the sea? "I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud." What is left when a cloud has passed away? Nothing. "If the wicked do penance for his sins, none of his sins which he hath committed shall be imputed to him." O divine mercy, by which God, who forgets and can forget nothing, no longer remembers our sins, even though they still live in the minds of men and in the memory of the sinner himself! They will no longer be imputed to him.

Consider, also, how generously God forgives us. The prodigal son received not only forgiveness—that was the least part of it; he was received back into his father's house, he was given the best robe, the ring, the shoes, he took part in the banquet which his father gave in his honor. In the sacrament of Penance the sinner receives forgiveness of his sins, entire remission of the eternal punishment which they deserve, and remission in part of the temporal punishment due to them; he receives the robe of sanctifying grace. Shoes are placed on his feet, namely, the grace of assistance, enabling him to resist the opportunities of sin, and to walk in the way of the command-

ments. He is reinstated as a child of God—the ring on the finger. He is admitted once more to the Lord's table—the banquet.

Consider, finally, what the sacrament of Penance has cost our Saviour. It may be described as the full and ripe fruit of His passion, His wounds, His cross, His bitter death.

Dearly beloved brethren: When we realize that in the sacrament of Penance two of God's perfections, His omnipotence and His mercy, vie with each other, as it were, to purify and cleanse our soul, the conclusion for us is clear and simple. We must exert ourselves with all our strength to receive this sacrament frequently and worthily, so that it may be for us a source of grace, and a means to eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII

On the Examination of Conscience

"I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (*Is.* xxxviii. 15).

"PENANCE is a sacrament in which the sins committed after Baptism are forgiven." This is the short definition given by the catechism, which goes on to explain further that "the sacrament of Penance remits sins and restores the friendship of God to the soul by means of the absolution of the priest." The absolution of the priest, therefore, forgives the sins—but what has the sinner to do? He must repent of his sins, confess them, and be willing to make satisfaction for them. These three conditions are necessary to make the sacrament valid; therefore, the part played by the penitent is as important as that of the priest. The catechism asks: "What must we do in order to receive the sacrament of Penance worthily?" And it answers: "To receive the sacrament of Penance worthily we must do five things: (1) We must examine our conscience; (2) we must have sorrow for our sins; (3) we must make a firm resolution never more to offend God; (4) we must confess our sins to the priest; (5) we must accept the penance which the priest gives us." To receive the sacrament of Penance worthily we must repent with our whole being; that is to say, with our understanding, by examining our conscience; with our heart, by contri-

tion; with our will, by the firm purpose of amendment; with our lips, by confessing our sins; with our hands and our whole body, by performing the penance enjoined upon us.

To-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will consider what examination of conscience—repentance of the understanding—consists in. One might well object that there is a great difference between the short definition of the sacrament of Penance given in the catechism, and the explanation later that five things are necessary to make a good confession. But it is quite easy to see that the obligation of being sorry for our sins and confessing them involves also the obligation to think them over beforehand and see how often and under what circumstances we have been guilty of them. When a tradesman wants to send in his bill to his customers he must first see what goods he has supplied, and how often, in what quantity, and at what price he has supplied them; otherwise, it would be impossible for him to make out an account. A penitent, in receiving the sacrament of Penance, is in his own person at the same time accuser, accused, and witness. Before making an accusation it is necessary to know whom we are going to accuse and of what crimes, and how often and under what circumstances they have been committed.

You may think that the priest might question the penitent in the same way that a judge interrogates and listens to the evidence of the accused party in a court of law. But, in the first place, if this were done the confession would be endless; and, in the second place, if the penitent had

not examined the state of his conscience beforehand he would not be in a position to answer the questions of the priest fully or correctly. A confessor is bound to ask questions in cases where the confession appears to him incomplete, or where the penitent, through ignorance or want of ability to express himself, finds a difficulty in telling all his sins. But this does not alter the rule that it is the duty of the penitent to accuse himself, and that, therefore, he must examine his conscience.

Great mistakes are often made in the way people examine their consciences, and I should like to call your attention to some of them.

First Fault.—The examination of conscience is not taken in hand seriously enough; it is not, we might say, pitched sufficiently high. We should begin by devoutly calling upon the Holy Spirit to help us, for it is exceedingly difficult for us to recognize the state of our own conscience. King David, who bewailed his sin day and night, says in Holy Scripture: "Who can understand his offences?" Can the sinner himself understand them? It is very difficult for him to know them, their gravity, their number, their attendant circumstances, their motives, their results. But what is difficult to us is easy to the Holy Spirit of God. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God," therefore, He will be able also to search out the depths of our hearts and souls. He can penetrate every complexity, sound any depth, dispel all mist and darkness; He can recall to our minds offences which we have forgotten, and make those which we would

gladly ignore real and apparent to us. Let us, therefore, begin by invoking fervently and with full confidence the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Every prayer-book contains prayers suitable to this purpose; or it will be sufficient to say seven Hail Marys in honor of the Holy Ghost.

Second Fault.—Some people, in making their examination of conscience, do not go back far enough. How far back into the past ought we to reach to find our starting point? To our last confession? In many cases this is right, but it is not always right. It is right when the last confession was in order, but it is not right when the last confession was perhaps not honest. It is possible that the last confession was in itself a sin. If it was not made sincerely, with an earnest purpose of amendment, with true contrition, after a careful examination of conscience, then before proceeding to anything else we must put this in order. It would be futile to continue building up a high tower into the air if the foundation were not firm. If one link in a chain has been eaten by rust the chain will not hold. Therefore, in our examination of conscience, it is not always sufficient to go back to our last confession, but, if there has been any fault in any of our confessions which would make them invalid, we must go back and back till we reach our last good confession. This must be the starting point of our examination of conscience.

Third Fault.—This is one which is very frequently committed; it consists in not making the basis of our examination wide enough to take in every kind and class of sin. How do you make

your examination of conscience? You say, "It is very simple. I take the ten commandments one by one and I ask myself whether I have sinned against them in thought, word, or deed." Very good, but what about the commandments of the Church? "I go through them also." That is right; but, in the case of grievous sins, at least, are you careful to count the number of times? "Yes, I do that, also; and now, surely, no more is necessary." Well, that depends. We now come to a point which is very frequently overlooked, namely, the sins of others; do you remember to examine your conscience on those sins to which you have contributed and of which you are, therefore, in a measure guilty. Think of the sins of your wife or husband, of your children, your servants, your companions, your fellow-workers. Has your example never given rise to them? Have they never been occasioned or helped by your advice or your commands, or your praise, or by your neglecting to blame and punish? In what a number of sins you have taken part and participated! David the Prophet prayed: "From the sins of others spare Thy servant, O Lord. If they shall have no dominion over me, then shall I be without spot, and I shall be cleansed from the greatest sin." Finally, it is to be remembered before anything that a good examination of conscience must not be confined merely to sins of thought, word, and deed, but must extend also to sins of omission. "Yes," you say; "I examine my conscience and confess regularly my omissions to say my morning and evening prayers, or my grace before and after meals." So far, so good;

but there are other sins of omission: Neglect in taking proper forethought in giving punishment where it is due, in doing the work you are bound to perform, in giving alms. O God, searcher of hearts, may it not be that more people will be lost on account of their sins of omission than on account of their sins of commission? This, at least, we know, that the causes enumerated by our Saviour as leading to condemnation before the judgment seat of God are in every case sins of omission. "Depart from Me," etc.

Fourth Fault.—The fourth and last fault of our examination of conscience often is that, in making it, we do not probe deep enough. We seek and discover and count up the sins of word and deed which appear on the surface; but we do not look for the root and source of our sin. Our Saviour Himself says that robbery, adultery, and murder take their rise in the heart. Just as souls once separated from the body are lost to sight, so are those sins which have never been clothed in word and deed easily overlooked and forgotten. What a multitude of such sins there are! Proud and vain and impure thoughts which the tongue has never spoken; undisciplined and revengeful feelings never realized in acts, but which are harbored in the heart. Are these not sins? Certainly they are, and the examination of conscience should search out the depths of the heart and of the spirit.

You see, therefore, dearly beloved brethren, that our examination of conscience must begin high—by invoking the Holy Spirit; that it must reach back far—to our last good confession; that it must

be wide enough to extend to the sins of others, and to our own sins of omission; that it must probe deep enough to touch our sins of thought and desire.

You will want to know how long a time should be spent over the examination of conscience. I can give you no general rule. It depends on how long a time has elapsed since your last confession. If you have not been to confession for a year, naturally you will take longer to examine your conscience than if you go regularly every month, or every week. It would take longer to weed a large meadow than a small garden. Moreover, the number and gravity of our sins has a good deal to do with it. He who knows he has a number of grievous sins upon his conscience must devote more time and care to examining it than one who has been guilty only of a few venial sins. A spot upon a pure white dress shows at once; but it takes sharp eyes to detect the different stains upon a very soiled garment. I would remind every one, but especially those who are inclined to be scrupulous, that though the Church insists on care being exercised in examining our conscience it does not expect us to remember all our sins. It is unfortunately invariably the case that those who have neglected confession for a long time hurry into the confessional as though it were forbidden to make any examination of conscience at all; while those who could in a few moments easily pass in review the short space of time since their last confession torture and torment themselves and even do themselves harm by trying to explore every hole and corner of their soul. Before con-

fession they spend the time, which might have been more profitably devoted to arousing their sorrow, in examining their conscience; during confession their scrupulosity makes them confused and involved; after confession they miss that peace and consolation which always follows a contrite confession, as well as the feeling of devotion and confidence which is the fruit of holy communion, because they always imagine they have forgotten or left out something. Therefore, for the especial benefit of the scrupulous, I would like to add to what I have already said about the examination of conscience—that it must not be too long.

Let us make our examination of conscience in the presence of God, determined to see our sins as they are, and to confess them as we see them. If we make it with a contrite heart it will help to awaken our sorrow, it will prepare us for confession, and be a great step toward obtaining pardon. "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin; for it is very great." Amen.

SERMON XXXIV

On Contrition

"A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (*Ps.* l. 19).

Our instruction last week dealt with the examination of conscience, which is the first of the five things we have to do in order to make a good confession. We saw that the examination of conscience may be looked upon as the repentance of the mind, and we passed rapidly in review the mistakes which we are most likely to fall into in making it. We must now go on to the second essential of a good confession, namely, contrition, which we may describe as the repentance of the heart. We have three points to consider:

I. The necessity of contrition.
II. The qualities it should have.
III. How we may move ourselves to it.

I

In order to understand that contrition is essential to a good confession, we have only to consider what it is. "What is contrition or sorrow for sin?" "Contrition or sorrow for sin is a hatred of sin and a true grief of the soul for having offended God, with a firm purpose of sinning no more." Contrition is, therefore, a change of heart by which sin, before a delight to us, becomes a cause of pain and suffering, making us hate what pleased us, and fly from, as bitter and

unpalatable, what formerly we thought sweet and delicious. Such is the nature of contrition, and if God is to forgive us our sins in the sacrament of Penance it is a necessity; for, what is the attitude of God Almighty toward sin? He forbids it, He punishes it, He detests it; He hates it with an undying hatred. God, on account of His holiness, can not do otherwise than hate and detest sin; is it, then, possible that He could forgive any one, who, so far from hating sin, loves it and finds his pleasure in it? It would be an impossibility, directly in opposition to the divine holiness. But that God should forgive a sinner who has become like Him, hating and detesting sin as He Himself hates and detests it, is comprehensible, and is in keeping with all God's known perfections.

God's very perfection and holiness make contrition an indispensable condition of a good confession; and as God never changes and can not change there can be no exception to this rule. Without sorrow no sin can be forgiven, whether under the Old or under the New Law, whether in confession or out of confession, neither in time nor in eternity. "No forgiveness without contrition" is a rule which admits of no exceptions.

Therefore, it follows that of the five things necessary to make a good confession, contrition is by far the most important. A person ill with fever, who is hardly able to collect his thoughts even for a few moments, can not be expected to make an examination of conscience as if he were quite well; it is impossible for a dying man, whose powers of articulation have almost left him, to

make his confession like one in health or to perform his penance when he is at the last extremity. But, every one to be forgiven must have a contrite heart, even though he be incapable of remembering or uttering the words necessary to make an act of contrition. Without contrition there can be no forgiveness.

Furthermore, contrition is essential to the sacrament of Penance, because it is part of the outward sign. We have already seen that the outward sign of a sacrament consists of two parts, matter and form. The form necessary to the outward sign of the sacrament of Penance is the absolution spoken by the priest; the matter is the contrition, the confession, the desire to make satisfaction. The contrition comes first; therefore, where contrition is absent, the outward sign is not complete; and where the outward sign is not entirely present there is no sacrament, and no forgiveness. Just as without water there can be no sacrament of Baptism, so without contrition there can be no sacrament of Penance. From whatever point of view we consider the matter, it is clear that without contrition our sins will not be forgiven.

II

"What kind of sorrow should we have for our sins?" "The sorrow we should have for our sins should be interior, supernatural, universal, and sovereign."

Our sorrow should be interior. This means that it should be heartfelt, piercing the soul and filling it with a hatred of sin as the greatest evil. It

is not enough to repeat the words of the act of contrition either by heart or out of a prayer-book; what we say must be true. What do you say when you make an act of contrition? "O my God, I am heartily sorry that I have offended Thee." Therefore, if you are not sorry for your offences you are telling God a lie to His very face. A painted fire is not a reality; it does not burn, it does not give heat; neither is sorrow which exists only in words genuine sorrow, nor can it avail for the reception of the sacrament of Penance, or effect our pardon. If one were able to make acts of contrition in a voice of thunder in every known language in the world, so long as it is not engraved in the heart it is just as far from being genuine sorrow as a painted fire is from being a real fire.

Our sorrow should be universal. This means that it must extend to all our sins—at least to all our mortal sins. If we are suffering from three mortal wounds, and we only get two of them dressed and bound up, the third alone will be quite enough to cause death. Supposing that we have only venial sins on our conscience, may we then dispense with contrition? By no means; we must try in such a case to excite ourselves to contrition just the same, because contrition is essential to the sacrament of Penance. Strictly speaking, it would be enough for us to have contrition for one single venial sin; but it is better to have sorrow for them all, or to take one or more mortal sins of our past life, and to confess them over again, exciting ourselves to fresh sorrow for them.

Contrition should also be supernatural. This is the quality hardest to understand and hardest to obtain; therefore, I beg of you to listen with great attention to the explanation. Contrition consists in being sorry for our sins. When we are sorry for anything whatsoever, we have always a reason for being sorry. We are sorry because something has injured either our soul or our body, or that it has had or will have, either in reality or in our imagination, unpleasant results for ourselves or for others. One can not possibly be sorry for a thing that has no unpleasant results for us, and which has not and never will have such an effect, either in imagination or in reality, upon ourselves or for other people. To feel sorrow without any ground for sorrow is as impossible as that a plant should grow without roots.

Therefore, sorrow for sin, to be genuine, must be founded on the harmfulness and evil consequences of sin. Are the consequences of sin evil? The consequences of sin are always evil, but they differ very much, and thus give rise to many different kinds of contrition. A drunkard lies reduced to a mere shadow on his bed of sickness; he sees what his intemperate habits have led to, and he curses and detests his sin because it has injured his body, and brought upon him the most terrible physical consequences. A prisoner in jail curses his crime because it has deprived him of his freedom. Other sins undermine the health, weaken the mind, destroy our credit and good name, or cover us with shame and infamy. Now, if such reasons as these lead us to repent of our

sins, causing us even to bewail them with many bitter tears, this is, no doubt, sorrow of a very real and heartfelt kind; but it is a natural sorrow, and, therefore, is not sufficient for the sacrament of Penance. When is our sorrow supernatural? It is supernatural when we repent of our sins on account of the evil consequences which they bring upon us for eternal life. Sin robs us of sanctifying grace; it deprives the unrepentant sinner of heaven, and casts him into eternal fire; it makes him the enemy of God, and crucifies our Saviour over again. These consequences of sin are very terrible, indeed, but they all affect and have reference to eternal life; therefore, the sorrow to which they give rise is a supernatural sorrow.

Sorrow for our sins because they have injured our health, our fortune, our liberty, our honor, or our life, though very real, is not a supernatural, but a natural, sorrow. Now you will be able to understand the answer of the catechism which gives us an explanation of what supernatural sorrow is: "What do you mean by saying that our sorrow should be supernatural?" "When I say that our sorrow should be supernatural I mean that it should be prompted by the grace of God, and excited by motives which spring from faith, and not merely natural motives." Amen.

SERMON XXXV

On Contrition

"A contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (*Ps.* l. 19).

In our last instruction we dwelt upon the qualities of true contrition; we saw that it must be "interior, supernatural, universal, and sovereign." It is supernatural when it comes from supernatural motives, in other words, when it is "excited by motives which spring from faith." How do we know there is a heaven and a hell, and that our Saviour died for our sins? By faith.

Two questions still remain to be answered in connection with supernatural contrition:

I. How many kinds of supernatural contrition are there?

II. How can we awaken it in our hearts?

We will consider these two points devoutly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The catechism asks: "How many kinds of contrition are there?" And it answers: "There are two kinds of contrition: perfect contrition and imperfect contrition, or attrition." Now, how do we distinguish perfect and imperfect contrition? They are both interior, universal, and supernatural; up to this point, there is no difference. The difference consists in the nature of the motive.

Supernatural sorrow is called forth by different causes, just as natural sorrow is. If we were to question a row of penitents waiting outside any confessional, and ask them one after another why they were sorry for their sins, some of them would give as their motive the fear of hell, and of God's judgments; others would say it was because sin was incompatible with true happiness; others, again, that it was the thought of the sufferings of Christ occasioned by their sins, and of the incomprehensible goodness of God, whom they had offended. They have all got real, supernatural contrition, and yet there are great differences in the contrition of each one. Some are sorry out of fear of being punished, and this is imperfect contrition; others are sorry purely out of love of God, which is perfect contrition. The former are thinking of the injury done to themselves; the latter are thinking of the offence offered to God, and the suffering caused to Jesus Christ by sin. We can now fully understand the two definitions given in the catechism. The catechism asks: "What is perfect contrition?" And it answers: "Perfect contrition is that which fills us with sorrow and hatred for sin, because it offends God, who is infinitely good in Himself, and worthy of all love." "What is imperfect contrition?" "Imperfect contrition or attrition is that by which we hate what offends God, because by it we lose heaven and deserve hell or because sin is so hateful in itself." Sin is a two-edged sword, cutting and wounding in two directions; injuring the sinner and offending God at the same time. If we are sorry for our sins because they offend God,

we have perfect contrition; if we are sorry for them because of the injury they do to our own souls, our contrition is imperfect.

It is not necessary to attain to perfect contrition before we receive the sacrament of Penance; imperfect contrition is sufficient to make a worthy confession. Nevertheless, it is very desirable that we should try our best to awaken perfect contrition in our hearts, for it is more meritorious and more pleasing to God. There are other occasions, besides the moment of going to confession, when it is highly advisable to endeavor to excite ourselves to perfect contrition; for instance, when we are in danger of death. An act of perfect contrition is the most beautiful way of bringing our life to a close; the surest means of obtaining the remission of our unforgiven sins; the best substitute for the sacrament of Extreme Unction, which it is not always possible to receive.

We now know clearly what contrition is, and when it is supernatural, as well as what constitutes perfect contrition. Our second question is even a more important one for us.

II

What must we do in order to excite in our hearts true, supernatural contrition? We will consider this carefully with the help of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we must humbly and fervently implore this grace from God. This is not everything we have to do, but it is the first thing. To justify what I am saying, and to convince you of its importance, I will make use of an instance out of the Old Testament. On one side of Mount

Carmel stood the godless King Achab with 450 of the priests of Baal; on the other side was the prophet Elias. Elias made the following proposition: That the priests of Baal on the one side, and he himself on the other, should kill a kid, and, building an altar, pile wood upon it, and lay the kid on the wood. But neither side was to kindle a fire. Then the priests of Baal were to call upon their gods, and Elias was to pray to the true God to send down the fire to consume the victim; whichever God sent the fire was to be acknowledged the true God. The priests of Baal gladly accepted the proposal, and did all that had been agreed upon. With a loud voice they called upon their god from morning till mid-day, and from mid-day till evening, but all in vain; no fire appeared. Elias, when he had killed the victim, erected the altar, and made all the prescribed preparations for the sacrifice, did something more. He dug a trench round the altar, and poured over it twelve jugs of water, so that victim, altar, wood, and stone were all saturated, and the trench filled with water. Why did he do this? To show that no material fire existed in connection with the altar. Then he prayed: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may learn that Thou art the Lord God and that Thou hast turned their heart again." He prayed for fire, for supernatural, heavenly fire, and he was heard. Fire fell from heaven and consumed the kid, the wood, the stones, and even the water in the trench.

Contrition is a fire that only the grace of God can kindle in the cold and sinful heart of man. Pray, therefore, for this fire. Say: "Hear me,

O Lord, hear me! I have fallen, but I have no power to raise myself up by my own strength; though I can soil my soul with the stains of sin I am not able to make it clean again. I can lay the yoke of sin upon my shoulders, but I am too weak to free myself from it. I can sin, indeed, but I do not know how to sorrow for my sins as I ought. I lose grace wantonly, but have no means of procuring it for myself again. Send down fire from heaven, that I may be truly contrite."

In such words as these we should implore the grace of contrition. Further, we should call to mind and try to lay to heart (1) that we have deserved God's temporal or eternal punishments, (2) that we are guilty of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, (3) that we have offended God, our highest good.

Certainly, if the awakening of contrition in our hearts depends chiefly on the grace of God, we should try to the best of our endeavor to kindle this divine fire. The contemplation of God's perfections will help to this end.

The *justice* of God.—Consider attentively the punishments which the justice of God has in store for sinners. Hell, that place of eternal fire and flames—miserable indeed must those souls be who inhabit it! What souls are they? Sinners, only sinners guilty of mortal sin, unrepentant sinners. Here, indeed, we have fire well calculated to awaken that other flame—the flame of true contrition. What would become of me were I to die without contrition? What will be my fate if I do not repent of my sins? Do I wish to be cast forever into the eternal flames?

The *goodness* of God.—Look at the home prepared for us by God. Peace, happiness, and blessedness are the portion of the citizens of the holy city! What a kingdom, and ruled over by how great a king! But by whom is it inhabited? By the saints. There are sinners among them, but only such as have repented of their sins and done penance for them. The light of heaven is indeed a torch at which to kindle the fire of contrition. A child will shed tears over the most trifling losses —perhaps a mere apple snatched from its hand; shall we not weep for our sins which have deprived us of eternal happiness?

The *mercy* of God.—Look at Calvary, at the cross, and at Him who hangs upon it. Who is He? How terrible are His wounds, how great His loss of blood, what agony He suffers, what a shameful death. Who is responsible for this? Your sins—yours quite as much as the sins of others. Oh, we may well light the burning flame of contrition in our hearts at the wounds of our Saviour. Cursed be the sins which have caused these sacred wounds, sins by which their merits are rendered of no avail.

The *majesty* of God.—See how exalted is the throne of God! Consider the eternal dignity of the crown He wears, the scepter He wields. Truly the consideration of them should consume us with sorrow for our sins, which have offended the incomprehensible majesty of God. What folly, insolence, and presumption it is which lead creatures to rebel against their Creator—slaves to rise up against their Master on whom they are

completely dependent, subjects to transgress the laws of the eternal King!

Contrition is the most necessary thing for obtaining pardon for our sins. We must pray earnestly for the grace of contrition, fixing our eyes at the same time on the flames of hell with which God punishes the sinner; raising them upward to the heavenly city built for us by the goodness of God, and which we lose by our sins. Let us turn our gaze also to the cross on which the Saviour has hung for love of us; finally, let us lift our eyes to the majesty of God, who is offended by sin. In this way we shall succeed in obtaining real and heartfelt contrition which will prepare the way for forgiveness, and be the foundation of our good resolutions and of a life of atonement. Amen.

SERMON XXXVI

On the Purpose of Amendment

"I have hated all wicked ways" (*Ps.* cxviii. 128).

THE first part of our preparation for the sacrament of Penance consists of repentance of the understanding, or the examination of conscience; the second part consists of repentance of the affections, or contrition. We have become convinced of their necessity, and we have seen what their characteristics should be. We now come to the third part, namely, the repentance of the will, or the purpose of amendment. The purpose of amendment is the outcome of contrition, and grows out of it, just as the blossom develops from the bud. True contrition involves a right resolution for the future, for any one who really regrets any of his actions is also firmly resolved never to act in the same way again.

Nevertheless, contrition and the purpose of amendment are two different things. Contrition has reference to the sins of which we have already been guilty, while the purpose of amendment bears upon those we might still commit. Contrition goes back to the past, but the purpose of amendment has to do with the future. Contrition is the bud, amendment is the blossom.

It goes without saying that our purpose of amendment must be made earnestly and seriously. It must be firm, strong to resist the evil influences of others, and independent of our own varying

moods and humors; nor must we be turned from it by the difficulties we may meet in keeping it.

Our purpose of amendment must be universal; it must embrace at least all our mortal sins without exception. To make an unsound ship seaworthy it would not be enough to stop up one or two leakages; if even one remained it would be quite enough to let in water and cause the vessel to founder; no matter if it be made of steel, fitted out with the most perfect machinery, and provisioned with every kind of provender, one leak might easily be enough to cause its destruction.

Our purpose of amendment must be practical; it must be capable of taking shape in our actions. When, as the result of our resolution, we find that we accomplish the object we had in view and that our life is freer from sin, then we may say that our purpose of amendment was a practical one; but when we find that it has no effect of any kind upon our lives and that there is no change at all in the number and grievousness of our sins, then we may be sure that our resolution of amendment was unpractical. Now, of course, this does not mean that if we sometimes fail in keeping our resolutions we must at once jump to the conclusion that our purpose of amendment was faulty. Even the stoutest wall may give away after a lapse of time, or a violent storm, or a shock of earthquake; and it is always capable of being demolished deliberately by human hands and implements. All we have to remember is that a purpose of amendment which produces absolutely no fruit in our life can not have been a sincere one.

If a wall falls down of its own accord, as soon as it is built there can be no doubt that it was badly constructed from the very beginning.

It is important for penitents to know what should be the characteristics of the purpose of amendment. There are one or two observations to be made as regards the resolutions suitable to the different classes of penitents!

I. For those who seldom or never commit grievous sin.

II. For those who are habitual sinners.

III. For those who find themselves exposed to special occasions of sin.

I

For those who seldom or never commit grievous sin.—Are there such people? Indeed, there are, children as well as adults. They determine never, under any circumstances, or for any reason whatsoever, to be guilty of a mortal sin; they have never committed a mortal sin, therefore, they have none to repent of, or to be sorry for. Should they not extend the scope of their purpose of amendment, and make a resolution to avoid all the lesser sins? Certainly they should; but how is this to be done? When you say, "I determine to avoid all venial sins without exception," do you take into consideration that their number is almost incalculable. We become guilty of them by want of care and forethought, by ignorance, by lack of fervor; from weakness, irritability, impatience, hastiness, bad humor, vanity; we commit them praying or working—even when we are engaged in good works; by thought, word, deed, or

omission. Such sins are more numerous than flies in summer; do you know what you are undertaking, when you resolve to avoid them all? You are undertaking to rise superior to all the ordinary weaknesses of the human race, whose members are all more or less afflicted with such faults; you are aiming at leading here on earth the life of the angels; you want to be like the most pure Mother of God who was, we know, free from the smallest stain of sin; you hope to achieve what the Church tells us has never been accomplished except by a very special grace from God. "Oh, no!" you reply, "I am not so ambitious as this; though I resolve to keep myself free from venial sin, I know very well that I shall not be successful." Then, in this case, your purpose of amendment was not serious at all, it would be better to limit your resolution somewhat, and so make it stronger. You can do this by determining to fight against one kind of venial sin, and if possible to root it out of your heart altogether. Take those faults into which you most frequently fall, or to which you are specially inclined; or in which your free will plays the greatest part, or, what comes to the same thing, the most serious sins of which you are guilty. Such a resolution as this is practical, and capable of being carried out. The author of the "Imitation" says: "If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men."

II

Let us now consider the purpose of amendment of those who commit sin out of habit. A great

number of people find themselves in this class. Sins of intemperance and of impurity are largely due to habit, and the same may be said of sins of anger and of the tongue. The habit is generally the result of some physical tendency or inclination, which grows and becomes strong by repeated indulgence, often holding a man bound as in chains for years together. It is very important that those whose sins spring from habits of this kind should know how to make their purpose of amendment.

The victims of such sinful habits say: "I have resolved to avoid all mortal sins, including those which are the outcome of habit. I am determined never to commit them again; I say this in all earnestness and sincerity." Very good, but will you allow me to ask you a few questions? How often have you been to confession during the last two or three years? You have been so and so often, and have you not each time confessed the same sins? Have you not each time resolved that you would not commit them any more, and yet each time, in spite of your resolution, in spite of your confession, have you not fallen into them again? Now, answer me, is this not so? "Yes, unhappily, it is so?" Very well, then, what can one think of your purpose of amendment? One day you resolve that you will never again be guilty of these sins, and the next day you are giving yourself up to your sinful habits just as often, and just as grievously as before. Can your resolutions be looked upon as very serious, and is there any hope that those you may make in the future will result in anything better? "Oh," you reply,

"do you want to drive me to despair? Human nature is weak; I can not do more than resolve never to sin again."

I do not want to drive you to despair, and I do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of your good intentions; but you must admit that there must be something wanting to your purpose of amendment. The force of habit is very great, and every yielding to the habit increases it; it will require more than a mere resolve to overcome it. The habit is of long standing, the resolution is new; the habit is deeply rooted, the resolution is probably superficial; in fact, resolutions have not availed and will not avail, because they have not been directed toward employing the *means* necessary to cure you.

What did the youthful David do when he found himself obliged to meet the giant Goliath in mortal combat? Did he merely say: "I will go and fight the Philistine"? That would have been a very fine-sounding determination, but no more. David did more than this. First he took refuge in prayer: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord God of hosts." Next, without exposing himself by going anywhere in the neighborhood of the giant, he tried to procure the weapons which he thought best calculated to be effective against his adversary, who was armed to the teeth. He selected five very flat stones to be hurled against him from his sling. Now are there any special weapons to be used in overcoming the force of habit? Yes, there are various weapons. Earnest, daily prayer; recourse to the intercession of the Mother of God, the frequent reception of the sacra-

ments. If you are in earnest in wishing to get the better of your habits of sin, then do not undertake merely to avoid the sins themselves, but resolve to employ the means which will be most effective in breaking the force of the habit. If you are not able to recognize them for yourself, your confessor will point them out to you. A man who is anxious to get rid of his evil habits, but who refuses to make use of the necessary means to do so, is like a cranky invalid who professes to wish for better health, but who will not take the medicines prescribed for him.

III

As regards the purpose of amendment of those who are exposed to the dangerous occasions of sin, we have a few important remarks to make. For some the occasion of sin may be a particular house of some kind, say a drinking saloon. As often as they set foot inside the door and find themselves in certain company they get drunk. For others the danger may be a book, a newspaper, or magazine, with or without illustrations, as the case may be. As often as they read this book they become a prey to the most horrible thoughts and desires. Again, sometimes relations with the opposite sex are found to be a constant source of temptation. But, as a matter of fact, everything that leads us into mortal sin, whether it be a book, a picture, a house, a special person or persons, is to be regarded and described as an occasion of sin. When one is free to avoid such occasions if one chooses, they become wilful occasions of sin; and when it is probable they will each time cause us

to sin afresh, they are called the proximate occasions of sin.

Now, when a man who lives in occasions of sin of this kind goes to confession, he says: "I am sorry for my sins and I resolve to avoid them for the future." Very good; but is this a valid purpose of amendment; is he willing to avoid not only sin but the occasions of sin? He answers: "No; I will avoid sin, but to avoid the occasions of sin is far too difficult a matter."

Now, what have you to rely upon that will enable you for the future to resist sin under the very circumstances in which up till now you have always yielded to temptation? You reply: "I rely on the grace of God to uphold me in all my difficulties." But Holy Scripture says: "He who loves danger will perish in it," and our Saviour has told us: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off . . . if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out." These words mean that if anything is to us an occasion of sin, even though it be as near and dear to us as our own hand or our own eye, we should cut it off and pluck it out and cast it from us. Therefore, in your case, you must not rely on the grace of God to help you. What have you to trust to? You say to me: "I will rely on the strength of my own resolution; I am so firmly determined that I feel sure I shall not break my word." So you think; but let me quote the words in which Holy Scripture describes the strength and firmness of the human will: "Your strength shall be as the ashes of tow." What does the strength of the ashes of burned tow amount to? The lightest

breath scatters them to the wind. What chance has your resolution against the force of habit? It will be forgotten in a few days or a few weeks, or so maimed and crippled that it will have lost all power. You think you will brave the occasions of sin and not fall; are you, then, wiser than Holy Scripture and the saints; wiser than all the confessors and all those who have triumphantly freed themselves from habits of sin? No; you are acting foolishly. He who is free to avoid the proximate occasions of sin and who will not do so is very far indeed from the purpose of amendment required for the valid reception of the sacrament of Penance. This must include not only the avoidance of the sin itself, but also of the occasions of sin.

"I will sin no more," is quickly and easily said, especially at that moment just before confession, when, with no temptation pressing upon us, and with our conscience aroused and alert, and the heart full of contrition, we are hoping and looking for forgiveness; in these blessed dispositions it is indeed easy to say: "I will sin no more." I admit that in most cases the purpose of amendment is the beginning, and not the completion, of a new life; I know too well that through our own instability of mind, and after a lapse of time, the evil inclinations of our poor human nature, the vacillations of the human will, the force of habit, the violence of temptation, and the power of human passions can utterly bring to naught the most earnest and serious purpose of amendment. Far be it from me to say that every one who sins again after receiving the sacrament

of Penance has not made a proper purpose of amendment. But, when we know how much we have to encounter, which has power to undo even the best purpose of amendment, ought we not to take trouble to strengthen it by every means in our power? If you are in the toils of sinful habits, consider well the means that will enable you to carry out the resolution you have made. If you are living constantly in the proximate occasion of mortal sin, make up your mind to avoid the occasion as well as the sin: "And I said, 'Now have I begun,' " said the Royal Prophet, " 'this is the change of the right hand of the Most High.' " This means I am now going to make a change in my life and I make it through the power of God, by the right hand of the Most High. Amen.

SERMON XXXVII

On Confession

"For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth" (*Ecclus.* iv. 24).

Our instructions on the sacrament of Penance now bring us to the subject of how to confess and acknowledge our sins. Our confession must be entire, sincere, and clear. As regards the first of these three qualities it is required (1) that we confess all the mortal sins of which we are conscious; (2) that we mention, as far as we can remember, the number of our mortal sins. This question of numbers is the trial of confessors. No matter what pains are taken in sermons and instructions to impress upon people that they must confess the number of their mortal sins, they nearly always omit to do so. Very often it is mentioned in much too indefinite a way; such expressions as: "once or twice," "sometimes," "now and then," "several times," "often," should be banished from the confessional, for they but serve to lengthen the confession. The catechism asks: "What should we do if we can not remember the number of our sins?" "If we can not remember the number of our sins we should tell the number as nearly as possible, and say how often we may have sinned in a day, a week, a month, and how long the habit and practice has lasted." To make our confession entire

we are, further, required to mention such accompanying circumstances as might alter the nature of the sin, turning, for instance, a venial sin into a mortal sin. Secondly, our confession must be clear; its clearness depends partly on our giving the right name to the different sins, partly on the order in which we enumerate them, and partly on our speaking in such a way as to make what we say intelligible to the confessor. Thirdly, our confession must be sincere; in other words, we should accuse ourselves of what we see ourselves guilty in the sight of God, without concealing or palliating anything.

It is in this that the difficulty lies. It is a humiliating and confusing thing to accuse one's self truthfully with one's own lips to another person of sins which we should like to hide from every one, ourselves included; which we prefer not even to think about or give a name to at all. It is this difficulty that sometimes leads penitents to conceal or minimize their sins in confession, while others avoid the confessional and the sacrament of Penance altogether.

But there are reasons which should influence us to be always sincere in confessing our sins, and we shall learn what they are, if we endeavor, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to answer the three following questions:

I. Who has commanded us to confess our sins?

II. To whom must we confess our sins?

III. What should be the fruit of a sincere confession?

I

Who has commanded us to confess our sins? No less a person than Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Recall to your minds the institution of the sacrament of Penance. After the resurrection the apostles were gathered together in a room at Jerusalem; when suddenly "Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. . . . He breathed on them and He said to them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.'" "There is no doubt whatever," you will say to me, "that by these words our Saviour gave to the apostles the power to forgive sins and instituted the sacrament of Penance; but He does not say a word about the confession of sins. It looks as though this were an invention of the priesthood, a merely human institution devised to enslave the minds and torture the consciences of men." Yet, dearly beloved brethren, I repeat, that, in the words I have quoted, Christ not only instituted the sacrament of Penance, but also ordained confession, and I will prove it to you if you will follow me attentively through five consecutive steps of reasoning:

First Step.—Our Saviour gave the apostles power in two very distinct and opposite directions: He gave them power to remit sin and power to retain it. This is incontestable.

Second Step.—Every one of the apostles was called upon to exercise his judgment in the case of each individual person who came to him, as to which of the two different kinds of power

should be applied to him. Were their sins to be remitted or retained? It must, perforce, be one of the two; to remit the sins of every sinner who presented himself would be folly; to retain their sins would be folly, also; the priest must come to a decision.

Third Step.—The decision must rest on some foundation; it must depend on the condition of the sinner, and whether he deserves to have his sins remitted or retained. To decide on any other ground would be unjust.

Fourth Step.—The priest can not judge of the condition of the sinner, the interior state of his soul, without knowing what his past life has been. This is clearly so.

Fifth Step.—There is only one way in which a priest can become acquainted with the interior life of a penitent, and that is by the sinner himself making known his sins to him; the confessor can not know them of himself, and he can not appeal to others for testimony; therefore, the sinner must himself be at one and the same time witness, accuser, and accused.

That Christ ordained that sinners should confess their sins to the apostles and their successors is quite as certain as that He endowed these last with double powers: to remit and to retain.

If the duty of confessing our sins had not been laid on us by Christ Himself no one in the world would have been in a position to introduce this custom or would have been justified in doing so. Moreover, some one person, whether Pope, bishop, or priest, would be known as the first to have enforced the observance of this practice

upon the faithful, and the name of any one responsible for so great an innovation would certainly have been remembered. Do not say that it was done by Pope Innocent III, for such an assertion is utterly without foundation. It was he who, at the Fourth Council of Lateran in 1215, decreed that all Christians must go to confession and receive holy communion at least once a year; but to say he introduced the practice of confession into the Church would be as true as to say that he introduced holy communion. If such a thing had been attempted by any Pope the whole of the Church would have cried out: "How can this man lay a burden on us which was never mentioned by the apostles, or by Christ Himself"; and what would have been impossible to a Pope would have been still more out of the question for a bishop or a priest.

We must believe, therefore, in the tradition of the Church, which teaches that confession is a divine institution, and, this being so, there remains nothing for us to do but to conform to what it ordains. Being of divine origin it will never be abolished. Let us fulfill our duty gladly in this regard, because it has been laid upon us by Christ. He says to us: "Look how I have borne thy burdens upon My shoulders; I have been accused and treated as a malefactor, I have been condemned and suffered crucifixion. Innocent, I have atoned for the sins of the whole world, thine amongst the number. When I have done all this for thee, do thou what thou canst for Me. Confess the sins of which thou art really guilty for My sake, who have taken upon Myself

before the eyes of the whole world the shame and the punishment which they have deserved. Do not refuse this request, or thou wilt be proving thyself unloving and ungrateful."

II

The thought of who the person is to whom we have to confess our sins constitutes our final difficulty in going to confession.

To whom do we go to confession? To a man who from all he has heard and hears and will hear has thoroughly learned to understand human frailty; who is weak, and has himself fallen into sin, who goes to confession himself, and who is bound to go, just as we are; one whose experiences are specially adapted to make him mild and merciful.

It is to a priest that we must acknowledge our sins, and he best fulfills his office as representative of Christ the more closely he resembles Christ in His mercy and gentleness, remembering the words: "I am come to seek that which was lost." "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, than over ninety-nine just who do not need penance." Do not be troubled by the thought of what the priest may think of you if you confess such and such a sin. He will only think there is a humble, a contrite, a sincere soul; it is easy to deal with such a one. Do not let the fear of what he might say to you weigh on you, for he will speak nothing but words of kindness and mercy. The deeper the wounds the more tenderly they need to be handled.

We confess our sins to a priest who soon for-

gets them again, and who, moreover, is bound in the strictest way to secrecy, not only during the life of the penitent, but even after he is dead. This is a law that is never relaxed, no matter what depends upon it. Even though it should cost him his life the priest may never break the seal of confession, whether he has actually given absolution or not. It is a sacred law and one which, thank God, is faithfully kept.

We must make our confession to one single confessor, whom we are at liberty to choose for ourselves out of many. What if we were each obliged to confess our sins here in the presence of the whole parish? "Oh," you reply, "I should sink into the earth." That is all very well, but suppose that God had made public confession a condition of His forgiveness? You would have to do it, painful though it might be. Now, which would you prefer? To confess your sins privately to one priest who is bound to secrecy, or to be brought to shame before the whole assembled world? There will come a day when every unconfessed sin will be revealed, not only to one parish, but before the whole assembled world; not to one priest and confessor, but to all who have ever set foot in a confessional; and not to men only, but to the angels, and to the devils: "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: 'Fall upon us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'"

"Well," you say, "I will not put it off so far as that; I hope before the end comes to have made a good confession." What do you gain by putting it off at all? Delay leads only to sacrilegious confessions, unworthy communions, and trouble

of mind. You will finally be obliged to face things, to call your offences by their right names, and give them their right number; added to which you will have to say that you have concealed them and how often you have concealed them, besides repeating all your unworthy confessions. What do you gain by this, I again ask you? You have only made almost unendurable a thing that already presented difficulties more than enough.

III

The final consideration which will help to make confession less painful to us is the thought of the fruits which result from a sincere confession.

If you are sincere in confession what is the result? You find in your confessor a real father, who sympathizes with you, and consoles and guides you, and to whom you can boldly say what you would shrink from confiding even to your own father and mother.

Moreover, you will find in the confessional a teacher who will dissipate your doubts, and clear away your ignorance, showing you the way and offering you the means of leading a really pious and holy life.

You find also a physician who can point out to you all the wounds of your soul without exception, and who has power to heal and cure them. Who would not gladly discover all his ills to his doctor if he possessed the certainty of their being cured?

You find in the confessional a judge—a judge who has power to set you free in the name of the Divine Trinity, whom you have offended; in the

name of Jesus Christ, who died for you, and by the power of the blood which He shed. This is a very great power. A guilty man, even though he be pronounced innocent, suffers from the pangs of conscience, which says to him: "You are guilty!" Even if public opinion acquits him, his conscience repeats: "You are guilty!" But, once acquitted by the judge of whom we are speaking, you are completely innocent and pure. Which of us is best entitled to count securely on the acquittal of this judge? Certainly not he who is the most skilful at deception, who is cleverest at excusing and defending himself; no, it is he who accuses himself humbly, contritely, sincerely: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow."

Oh, beautiful result of penance for the contrite sinner! The burdened heart is relieved, the pricks of conscience lose their sting, and the fullness of grace and forgiveness are bestowed. It is as though the blood of Christ flowed into the soul of the sinner, purifying it, sanctifying, enlightening, strengthening, and consoling it. Let us, therefore, make our confessions in all sincerity. Do we wish by our own fault to let the blood of Christ flow for us in vain? If we will not submit here below in the tribunal of penance to His merciful judgments, then in eternity He will show Himself to be a severe judge who knows no pity; accuser, witness, and judge in one person. What sentence will then await us? "For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth." Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII

On Satisfaction

"Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven" (*Matt.* xviii. 18).

We now come to the last of the five things which the penitent must do in order to receive the sacrament of Penance—namely, satisfaction. Satisfaction consists in the performance of the penance which, as we all know, the priest imposes on the penitent in confession. In this connection there are three things to be considered:

I. The object of the penance.
II. The confessor's right to impose it.
III. The manner in which it should be performed.

I

The object of the penance given us by the priest explains the nature of satisfaction.

The catechism asks: "Why does the priest give us a penance after confession?" "The priest gives us a penance after confession that we may satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to our sins."

(a) The first object of this penance, therefore, is to satisfy God. The very word "satisfaction" implies that an offence has been committed, and that the offender is trying to make amends for what he has done. Now, the injured party has

the right to demand satisfaction, which means he can require the person who has offended him to do something to make good and repair the offence. What is so exacted is called the atonement or satisfaction. Now, in the case we are speaking of—the satisfaction offered in the sacrament of Penance—who is the offender and what is the offence? The offence is every sin we commit; the offender is the sinner; the one offended is God Almighty. Before forgiving the sins of mankind God exacted perfect satisfaction—such satisfaction as would fully atone for and make good the offence offered to Him. There was no creature either in heaven or upon earth who was capable of making this satisfaction, therefore the Son of God became man, and in accordance with the will of His Father took upon Himself the shame and bitterness of the cross that He might atone for our sins in our place.

You will ask, "If Christ has made full satisfaction for our sins why is it necessary that we should make satisfaction, also? If some one else pays my debts, I am not called upon to pay them over again." No, but you must at least make it clear that they are being paid with your consent; you must show that you would pay them yourself if you could; you must play some little part in trying to satisfy the claim of your creditor. A young man has fallen into disgrace with the king, his master. His father, who stands high in the royal favor, pleads on bended knee that his son may be forgiven. The least one might expect of the son would be that he should throw himself down beside his father. It is the prayer

of the father that propitiates the king, but the son, on his side, must show that he is ready to make what amends he can. Christ has made full satisfaction for us; it is from His sacred wounds that the sacrament of Penance derives its power to forgive; but it is only seemly that we ourselves should be ready to offer to the divine justice such satisfaction as is in our power, by accepting the penance laid upon us by the priest.

(b) Another reason why a penance is given us in confession is that we may satisfy for the temporal punishment due to our sins. The eternal punishment due to mortal sin is forgiven together with the sin in the sacrament of Penance; this is a grace for which we ought to be everlastingly grateful. But, besides the eternal punishment, there are the temporal punishments attached to sin, and these must be endured either here below or in purgatory. It is true that the sacrament of Penance remits them in part, though not entirely; in most cases, on the contrary, there still remains something to expiate. "Why," you ask, "if God remits the eternal punishment due to sin, does He not remit the temporal punishment, also; if He is willing to do the greater, why should He not do what is less?" To this I reply: When a reprieve is granted to a man condemned to death, and his life is spared, why is he not allowed to go scot free? He never is. A term of imprisonment is invariably substituted for the death penalty. In the same way, temporal punishment replaces the eternal punishment which has been remitted; we find instances of this in Holy Scripture. King David had sinned griev-

ously by murder and adultery; but he reformed his life and was deeply contrite. The prophet of God said to him: "The Lord has taken away thy sin . . . nevertheless, the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (2 *Kings* xii. 13, 14). The loss of his beloved child was the temporal punishment which remained. Moses doubted for one moment the truth of the divine promises; therefore, God said to him: "Go up into this mountain Abarim, . . . and die thou in the mountain. When thou art gone up into it, thou shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in Mount Hor, and was gathered to his people. Because you trespassed against Me." We can not doubt that Moses and Aaron had both obtained forgiveness of their sins; nevertheless, the temporal punishment due to them was not entirely remitted; they were condemned to die without entering the promised land.

It is certain, therefore, that the temporal punishment is not always remitted with the sin and with the eternal punishment. To satisfy God for the temporal punishment still due to our sins the priest lays a penance upon us in confession.

(c) This penance is not only a punishment; it should also be a means of amendment, and the confessor selects such acts of penance as will best help to this end. It is a mistake to suppose that he must confine himself to imposing the recital of certain prayers; he may if he please give as a penance an alms, a fast, a pilgrimage, a visit to a church. Prayer is, indeed, salutary for all; but there is nothing to prevent a confessor imposing a fast as a penance on the intemperate,

or an alms on the avaricious who have sinned by injustice; in a word, he may enjoin anything that he considers calculated to amend the life of the penitent, to overcome his evil inclinations, and break through his habits of sin.

II

The second of the two questions which we have set ourselves to answer to-day is: What right has the priest to impose works of penance upon the penitent? What gives him the power to do so, for it is not contained or implied in the power bestowed on him to remit or retain sins? The priest derives his power to impose works of penance upon the penitent from Jesus Christ Himself, who gave to His Church the power not only to loose, but also to bind.

The priest is not usurping a power to which he is not entitled when he imposes works of penance; on the contrary, he not only possesses this right, but he is under a strict duty in this regard, for he has been commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to do so. Our Saviour really said to His apostles and to their successors, "*Whatsoever* (note the word "whatsoever") you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven, and whatsoever (again note the word) you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven." If these words have any meaning at all they contain the power to impose works of penance. To bind means to fasten, to restrict liberty, to lay under a charge or obligation. "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven"—everything, therefore, laid upon us by the suc-

cessors of the apostles shall be the same as though it had been laid upon us in heaven. We gladly believe that the priest has power to forgive our sins; let us also be willing to acknowledge his power to impose works of penance upon us. He has power to bind and to loose.

Moreover, even if the power of the priest in this regard were not so clearly indicated by our Saviour's words, and by Holy Scripture, we still would be obliged to admit that he had power to impose works of penance. Why so? Because the Church has exercised this right from the most ancient times, and with much greater severity than is at present the case. In the early Christian days public penance was prescribed, at all events, for public sinners; a special place was set apart before the church door, and inside the church itself, for those who were doing the public penances. Nowadays we do penance in secret; the penitent has no occasion to tell, and the priest is forbidden to reveal under any circumstances what penance he has imposed on any particular penitent. In former days, when public penance was required, it had to be performed before the absolution was pronounced; now we are absolved first, and we do penance afterward. Lastly—and this is the most important difference of all—in former times the penances enjoined were of a very severe and rigorous character; now they are extraordinarily mild and lenient: a rosary, a Hail Mary, a litany, a few prayers—such things can hardly be called penances at all. In the old days five, ten, or fifteen years' penance was often imposed—even life-long penances were by no means

unusual. The confessor was not at liberty to select the penance he wished to give his penitent; he was obliged to name the penance which was allotted to the particular case in the "penitential" or penance-book; the least penance which could be imposed for a mortal sin was a fast of forty days. There are many of these "penitentials" still in existence.

Why has the Church changed in this way from rigorous severity to such extreme leniency? God's justice remains the same; the principles of the Church have not altered, and men are still what they were; they do not sin less often or less grievously—quite the contrary. But in another respect they are different; their zeal to do penance has grown cold and the Church fears that if the old methods were persevered in Christians might be frightened away from the sacrament of Penance altogether; therefore, she chooses the lesser evil. It is better that souls should gain the remission of their sins and of the eternal punishment due to them, even if they do not fully satisfy for the temporal punishment, than that they should turn away from the sacrament altogether, and receive neither forgiveness for their sins, nor freedom from eternal punishment.

III

The answer to our third question—the manner in which we should perform the penance—arises in part out of what we have been saying.

The penance serves a three-fold end, and, in order to realize it, we must perform our penance zealously and conscientiously. The priest has the

undeniable right to impose it upon us; therefore, the performance of it is a sacred duty, and one which, under some circumstances, can only be neglected under pain of grievous sin. "What!" you exclaim, "is it always a sin to put off and delay saying our penance!" I have not said that; however, if before receiving absolution any one were to make up his mind not to say his penance, his confession would be invalid, for in such a case the desire to make satisfaction would be absent. If a man goes to confession fully intending to make satisfaction, but later on omits to say his penance, the question then is whether he neglected or delayed it by his own fault. If the penance was imposed for mortal sin, and if from carelessness or indifference he does not say it, or puts off the performance of it for any considerable length of time, he commits a grievous sin, and loses a great number of graces.

The very leniency of the penance laid upon us in confession should be a reason for performing it with as little delay as possible, and as devoutly and conscientiously as we can. Moreover, because it is so small and trifling and so out of proportion to our sins, it is good to add to it and punish ourselves by undertaking voluntary mortifications, such as fasting and prayer, acts of self-denial, and silence; but, above all, to try to accept in the spirit of penance all the sorrow God sends us. We see, then, that works of penance are of three kinds: Firstly, those laid upon us by God—these must be endured whether we like it or not, the question is *how* we mean to bear them; secondly, those laid upon us by our confes-

sor—these must be performed under pain of sin; and, finally, those which we impose upon ourselves. These last are probably the most precious and the most meritorious of all, because they are undertaken of our own free will out of zeal for the glory of God and a desire to atone for our sins. The lighter the penances of the Church, the more room there is for voluntary acts of penance to supply what is wanting in the satisfaction God requires. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX

On Indulgences

"Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (*Matt.* xviii. 18).

We have concluded our instructions on the sacrament of Penance. Before we pass on to explain the sacrament of Extreme Unction, we must say a word on indulgences, a subject which is closely related to the sacrament of Penance, and which the catechism connects with it.

We must believe two things about indulgences: (1) That the Church has the power to grant them, (2) that the use of them is very salutary. That we may be fundamentally convinced of this, we will consider the four following points, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. The nature of an indulgence.
II. Its origin.
III. How many kinds of indulgences there are.
IV. How they are of benefit to us.

I

The catechism defines the nature of an indulgence shortly and concisely: "What is an indulgence?" And it answers: "An indulgence is the remission, whole or in part, of the temporal punishment due to sin." We know that in the sacrament of Penance we are released from the guilt of our sins and obtain remission of the eternal punishment due to them, and of a part of

the temporal punishment; a penance is imposed upon us in order that we may satisfy for and wipe out what remains of the temporal punishment. But, however promptly and fully and devoutly we perform our penance, the ledger in most cases will still show a balance against us. This may be large or small; the amount of our debt is known only to God, but by some means or another it must be fully discharged.

To help us to pay this debt of temporal punishment the Church proffers her aid. How does she help us? By means of indulgences, by which she remits, apart from the sacrament of Penance, the temporal punishment due to those sins the guilt of which has already been forgiven. There is clearly a great difference between receiving the sacrament of Penance and gaining an indulgence. First of all, the sacrament of Penance forgives sin and remits eternal and temporal punishments; indulgences remit only the temporal punishment due to sin. The one may be compared to a doctor who treats and cures all kinds of disorders, however trifling or however serious; while the other is more like the specialist who deals only with one class of ailment. Secondly, though it is true that temporal punishment is remitted by the sacrament of Penance and by indulgences alike, still there is a difference. In the one case, they are remitted by virtue of the sacrament, in the other they are remitted independently of the sacrament, by the power of the Church. A water-mill and a wind-mill can both grind corn, only the one is driven by the power of the water, the other by the force of the wind. Thirdly, in the

sacrament of Penance, the temporal punishment is remitted together with the sin; but an indulgence can be gained only when the sin has already been forgiven. When our Saviour said: "Lazarus, come forth!" the yoke of death fell from him; but it was only when he had left the tomb that he was freed from the cords by which his limbs were bound.

II

The Church has been empowered to remit the temporal punishment due to sin. By whom? By Christ, when He said: "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." The power of the priest to forgive sin is founded on the words of Christ: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven," and his right to impose works of penance on the Saviour's words: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven." Finally, in granting indulgences, the Church claims her right from the words of Christ: "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." And, indeed, if our Saviour empowered the Church to forgive sins and to remit eternal punishment, why should He not also have given her the right to remit temporal punishment. Moreover, though an indulgence lessens the temporal punishment due to the sinner, still it in no way defrauds the divine justice. Suppose that a father makes use of the earnings of one son who is industrious and provident to pay the debts incurred by another son who is not; the interest of the creditors would

not suffer, for they are paid in full, not indeed by the debtor himself, but by his relations.

Indulgences operate in somewhat the same way. The Church is one great whole, one body, one person; she is immortal, the bride of Christ, the Mother of many children. Some of her children have suffered more than their sins deserved; they have done more penance than they had need of. Think of our Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross, of the torments endured by the martyrs, of the labors and sufferings of the apostles, the fasts and solitudes of the hermits, the self-denial and the prayers of the Religious Orders, the heroism of the Crusaders! We can not doubt that many of them more than discharged their debt of temporal punishment. Have they, then, done what was unnecessary and superfluous? By no means; they have contributed to the ocean of satisfaction, the rich treasure of which the Church, our common Mother, is the guardian and administrator.

Let us look at things a little more closely. Did Christ, by His sufferings and death, offer only just exactly the atonement that sufficed to save us? He did a great deal more than this; His atonement was superabundant—a sea of unfathomable depth, a boundless ocean, an inexhaustible treasure-chest committed to the administration of His bride, the Church. Is it to be wondered at that she spends her riches for the benefit of her children; that she offers the passion of Christ and the sufferings of the saints with both hands to the divine justice in satisfaction for the punishments which are still due to us? Can we think

it strange, under these circumstances, that the Church should constantly make it possible for the faithful to gain rich indulgences in many different forms?

III AND IV

The catechism tells us that "there are two kinds of indulgences—plenary and partial. "A plenary indulgence is the full remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. A partial indulgence is the remission of part of the temporal punishment due to sin." A plenary indulgence may be gained by making the Stations of the Cross, and in this case it can be gained without the usual conditions of confession and communion.

A more ordinary form of plenary indulgence is that granted for reciting after a worthy confession and communion the prayer: "Behold, O most good and most sweet Jesus," etc. The prayer must be said before a representation of the crucifixion and must be followed by the usual prayers for the Pope's intention. A partial indulgence is granted for invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary or for reciting the "Hail Mary."

To be in a state of grace is indispensable for gaining an indulgence; this is the first and the most essential condition, for whoever is not in a state of grace must be in a state of mortal sin, and, therefore, deserving of eternal punishment; he is the enemy, not the child, of God. What meaning could there be in forgiving temporal punishment to a soul against whom a sentence of

eternal damnation still stands unrevoked? In addition to being in a state of grace, to gain an indulgence we must conscientiously fulfill all the prescribed conditions. In every case a certain co-operation on our part is necessary; to obtain forgiveness of our sins we must repent and go to confession; to obtain remission of the temporal punishment due to us we must not only repent and go to confession, we must also accept and perform the penance imposed upon us by the priest; to obtain, by means of an indulgence, a remission of the temporal punishment due to us, we must faithfully carry out the prescribed conditions.

From all that we have said about the nature and origin of indulgences, as well as the conditions on which they may be gained, it is clear that to charge the system of indulgences with diminishing fervor, decreasing the love of penance, and making sin easier, is a most unjust and unfounded accusation to bring against the Church; on the contrary, whoever desires to gain indulgences must frequent the sacraments, perform works of penance, and add to his habits of prayer; all these things are highly salutary in themselves, and the result, namely, the remission of the temporal punishment due to sins, is surely in the highest degree salutary also. Moreover, we can apply these indulgences to the holy souls in purgatory, and so hasten their entrance into heaven. In the year 1776 a great jubilee indulgence was granted, and the faithful flocked to the sacraments in such numbers, and with such frequency, that Voltaire, that arch-enemy of the

Faith, who with his friends worked all his life to bring about the downfall of religion, was obliged to admit that the jubilee had done more good to the cause of God than all his works and writings had done harm. Let us believe that the Church has power to grant indulgences and that it is highly salutary for us to gain them. Amen.

SERMON XL

On the Outward Sign and the Inward Grace of Extreme Unction

"Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (*James* v. 14).

We will now begin our explanations on the sacrament of Extreme Unction. The Catholic Church provides the sacrament of Baptism for the new-born, who stand on the threshold of life; and for the dying and those who are in danger of death provision has also been made in the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

As Extreme Unction is usually received by people who are grievously ill, there is neither time nor opportunity at the moment it is administered to give any instruction concerning it. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should, while in good health, learn all we can about a sacrament of which we shall have the utmost need in our last extremity.

Extreme Unction, like every other sacrament, presents the three essential elements: outward sign, inward grace, and institution by Jesus Christ. With the help of the Holy Spirit we will consider briefly:

I. What is the outward sign,
II. What is the inward grace,
which we receive in Extreme Unction?

I

We will begin with the outward sign. The catechism asks: "What is the sacrament of Extreme Unction?" And answers: "Extreme Unction is the sacrament which, *through the anointing and prayer of the priest,* gives health and strength to the soul, and sometimes to the body, when we are in danger of death by sickness." Therefore, the outward sign consists in the anointing with holy oil and the prayer which the priest says: "Through this holy unction and through His most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing, hearing," etc.

The first part of the outward sign is the anointing with oil. This oil is made from olives, the fruit of the olive-tree. The very mention of this name takes our thoughts back to Gethsemani, where, under the shade of the olive-trees, watering the very roots with His precious blood, our Saviour prayed in His agony. No material in the world could be so appropriate for the sacrament of the dying, for those who lie in the agony of dissolution, than the fruit of the tree under which our Saviour Himself experienced the bitterness of death, where He prayed in His extreme need, and was strengthened and consoled by the visit of an angel.

The olive oil used in Extreme Unction is holy oil, for it is blessed and consecrated for its sacred purpose by the bishop on Holy Thursday, that day which is at the same time the anniversary of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and of our Saviour's agony in the garden.

How is the sick person anointed in the sacrament of Extreme Unction? On the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the hands and feet; in fact, the five senses are anointed, for the eye is the organ of sight, the ear is the organ of hearing, the nose that of smell, the lips of speech, the hands and the feet those of touch. It is fitting that these parts of the body should be so anointed, for it is true to say that by far the greater number of sins are committed through the medium of the senses, and find in them either their origin or their fulfillment.

The anointing is done in the form of a cross, and this has a deep meaning. The form of the cross indicates the source from which all the graces of Extreme Unction take their rise—the passion and the cross of Christ; it further points to the effects which the sacrament should bring forth—victory over the evil enemy. Moreover, the cross should serve as a reminder to Christians to bear their sufferings after the example of their crucified Saviour.

One part of the outward sign, therefore, consists in the anointing with holy oil; the second part consists in the prayer said by the priest at each unction: "Through this holy unction and His most tender mercy may the Lord forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing, by hearing," etc. These prayers must be said out loud by the priest as he performs the anointings.

II

We now know that the outward sign of Extreme Unction is the anointing with oil and the

prayer of the priest. Now let us inquire what is the inward grace which it gives to the soul. The catechism asks: "Which are the effects of the sacrament of Extreme Unction?" "The effects of Extreme Unction are: First, to comfort us in the pains of sickness and to strengthen us against temptation; second, to remit venial sins and to cleanse our soul from the remains of sin; third, to restore us to health when God sees fit."

Let us consider the effects of the sacrament a little more closely. It comforts us in the pains of sickness and strengthens us against temptation. A sick person is generally in constant pain. Long, weary days of great and often almost unendurable suffering and sleepless nights are the invariable accompaniment of serious illness, and often the patient suffers further from want of proper care. Temptations, too, frequently assail us when we are struck down by illness, for we must not suppose that even in the presence of death we are free from the inclination to do wrong. We are tempted to be impatient and discontented, to complain and murmur against the dispensations of God. When we are in health we sin from arrogance and pride, but in illness we are tempted to offend God out of despair and want of courage. In our days of happiness we forget death and the judgment which awaits us, but in sickness the thought of it almost leads us to give up hope; in life we fear death too little, but when we come to die we are apt to fear it too much; when God asks of us the sacrifice of our life we are sometimes reluctant to give it to Him. Therefore, ill, weak, and dying as we are,

we have still to fight. Life is a battle, but death is one also. The enemy of our salvation says to us, "*Ultima hora est!*" The last, the momentous, hour has come; we must either win now, or suffer the final defeat. And because we are so weak and ill the devil will summon all his forces at this decisive moment and make a last assault upon us. Oh, what a grace at such a time to receive a sacrament that will give us strength to bear our sufferings, to overcome our temptations, to sustain with courage the last decisive battle, and to pass victorious into the life to come!

Extreme Unction remits venial sin. It seldom happens that when we fall ill we feel ourselves to be entirely free from venial sin. Our unknown sins, or those we have neglected to confess or to be sorry for, are on our conscience; perhaps even on our bed of sickness we may be adding to their number. The contrite reception of the sacrament of Extreme Unction wipes them all away, even the mortal sins which the dying person is no longer able to confess. How often does it not happen that, at the last, a man is incapable of making his confession; he would like to speak, but he can not; or he manages to say something, but no one can understand him; he is truly contrite and repentant, but his mind wanders, he becomes delirious, and the shadows of death close in upon him. What a consolation to think that in such dire need Extreme Unction will come to our aid, endowed with all those powers for forgiving sin which otherwise belong only to the sacrament of Penance.

Extreme Unction cleanses our soul from the

remains of sin. We feel the remains of any grave bodily illness after we are quite well again in many ways, such as weakness of the limbs, for instance, or the falling out of our hair; a serious wound, though it is completely healed, marks us with a deep and disfiguring scar. Our sins, even though they have long been forgiven, leave traces behind them in our soul, which show themselves in a certain weakness, an inclination to fall again into the same sin. We are cleansed of such remains of sin by the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

The effects of Extreme Unction are very salutary, and, when consistent with the good of our soul, they operate in favor of the body also, often alleviating suffering and even bringing about a complete restoration to health. For this reason it is exceedingly foolish of people when they are sick, or of their friends, in order to avoid alarming the patient, to put off the reception of Extreme Unction till the last minute, when unconsciousness has actually set in and death is imminent. The object of Extreme Unction is to enable sick people to bear their sufferings, to overcome temptation, to meet death with courage, and to be triumphant in the final struggle; and, if it should not be the will of God to restore him to health, then to enable him to die a happy death, and to pass purified and full of grace into the world to come to receive the crown which he has merited. Amen.

SERMON XLI

On the Institution and the Reception of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction

"Is any man sick among you, let him call in the priests of the Church" (*James* v. 14).

We saw last Sunday what constitutes in the sacrament of Extreme Unction the three things essential to a sacrament, and we considered fully the two first of them. The anointing with holy oil and the prayer of the priest are the outward sign; the strength communicated to the soul, and often the restoration of bodily health are the inward grace.

We have to consider to-day the third essential of the sacrament:

I. The institution by Christ,

and as our second point we will devote ourselves to learning all that it is necessary to know about the manner of receiving tthe sacrament.

I

How do we know that the sacrament of Extreme Unction was instituted by Christ? We know it (1) from Holy Scripture and (2) from the constant teaching of the Church.

Therefore, first of all, the divine institution of the sacrament of Extreme Unction can be proved from Holy Scripture. How can this be done? Where do we find it? Some authorities have held that it is to be traced by the words which occur

in speaking of the apostles in the Gospel of St. Mark: "And they anointed with oil many that were sick, and they healed them" (vi. 13). These words are certainly to be found in the Gospel, but it is exceedingly doubtful whether at the time to which they refer the apostles were as yet priests, and whether the sick people spoken of had been baptized, or even if they were grievously sick at all; we can not be sure that they received any inward grace other than the healing of their bodily ailments; in fact, it is far from certain that this anointing represented the administration of Extreme Unction.

But there is another passage in Holy Scripture which we may point to with good reason to show that Extreme Unction was instituted by Christ. It is to be found in the Epistle of St. James: "Is any man sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him."

There can be no doubt that these words refer directly to Extreme Unction and to Extreme Unction as a *sacrament.* They indicate, first, those for whom the sacrament was instituted: "Is any man sick among you"; and, next, the minister of the sacrament: "Let him call in the priests of the Church." The outward sign, as well as the inward grace, applied to both body and soul are specifically mentioned: "And they shall pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; . . . and the Lord shall raise him up,

and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him." Certainly, you say to me, it is quite clear that St. James is here alluding to Extreme Unction; but he does not say a word about its institution by Christ. No, that is true, but he describes the effects in such a way as the unfailing and necessary consequence of the rite that it is clear we have to do with a sacrament: "The Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him." It is plain that the apostle was recommending Extreme Unction to the faithful; and it is likely that they followed his advice, and in case of illness received the last sacraments; therefore, it is incontestible that the sacrament of Extreme Unction, such as we have it to-day, was in common use at the time of the apostles, and with their knowledge, and by their advice. Now, the apostles themselves had no power to institute a sacrament; so, if it had not been instituted by Christ, would they have taught concerning it, or even have tolerated its use? If they were capable of doing such a thing they were not true exponents of the Gospel, on the contrary, they were guilty of falsifying it; instead of being the pillars that uphold the Church they are its first destroyers. But, the apostles were indeed true exponents of the Gospel, and, this being so, it follows that the sacrament of Extreme Unction was really instituted by Christ, or it would never have been administered with the knowledge and by the advice of the apostles.

Further, what we here read in Holy Scripture is in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, with the decisions of all her coun-

cils, and with what has been at all times her practice.

II

After having considered the outward sign, the inward grace, and the institution by Christ of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, I should like to say a few words about its reception. In this connection there are three points to deal with: The person who is receiving it, when and how often it may be received, and the manner in which it should be received.

Three conditions are attached to the reception of the sacrament of Extreme Unction. The recipient must be a Catholic, he must have attained the use of reason, he must be in danger of death by sickness. The first of these conditions needs no explanation. As regards the second, we must note that young children, even although they have been baptized, and are seriously ill, can not receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction; only those children who already attend school, and go to confession, though they have not yet made their first communion, may be anointed. Thirdly, to receive Extreme Unction we must be in danger of death by sickness. It is not necessary to be dying, or to be very near death, or even for death to be probable; it is sufficient that our illness be of a dangerous character. Illness alone is not enough; we must be dangerously ill. Danger of death by itself is not enough; we must be in danger of death by sickness. Soldiers, before a battle, live in almost momentary expectation of death; but they may not receive the sacrament

of Extreme Unction because they are not ill. Where the three conditions are fulfilled, not only is the sick person eligible for the sacrament of Extreme Unction, it is his duty to receive it.

As regards the time for receiving Extreme Unction the catechism tells us: "We should not wait until we are in extreme danger before we receive Extreme Unction, but, if possible, we should receive it whilst we have the use of our senses." The sacrament is more efficacious the greater the faith and devotion and the more heart-felt the sorrow we bring to it, and obviously we are more capable of such dispositions while we are in possession of all our faculties than when we are in a state of unconsciousness. What is the reason that so often the reception of the last sacraments is delayed till almost the very end? Is it because the sick person refuses to receive them? Not in the least; it is his friends who object to telling him the truth, and letting him know that his illness is serious; for fear of agitating him they purposely deceive him. Often their plans fail entirely and the patient, in spite of their endeavors, realizes perfectly well the gravity of his condition. How cruel it is, then, to deprive him of the grace, the consolation, the strength so necessary for him during his last hours!

How often may we receive Extreme Unction? As often as we are dangerously ill; and, if in the course of the same illness, the danger passes away, and afterward the patient's state becomes critical once more, he may receive the sacrament again.

The catechism asks: "How should we receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction?" And it answers: "We should receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction in the state of grace, and with lively faith and resignation to the will of God." Therefore, the sick person should, if possible, go to confession and try to excite himself to perfect contrition. He should also do his best to awaken sentiments suitable to one who is sick and dying —faith, hope, love, resignation. These are the virtues by which the soul is brought into relation with God, and closely united to Him. What would a man do who found himself falling off a high rock? He would grasp with both hands every tree or shrub, however thorny, that came within his reach. How does a sailor act when his ship goes down under him? He looks out for any spar or piece of wreckage that will help him to keep afloat. What should a sick man do when the world is slipping away from him? He should cling with all his might and with every fiber of his being to God, the eternal Good. He should cling to Him with all the powers of his mind, by believing all He has revealed; with his heart, by concentrating his desires on the blessings God has promised him; with his will, by resigning himself completely to the will of God, and offering Him the sacrifice of his life. Such dispositions as these will fit him to gain the plenary indulgence attached to the general absolution given after the last anointing, and for the gaining of which one of the conditions is entire submission to the holy will of God.

The friends of the sick person should see that

the sick-room is properly prepared for the administration of the sacrament. It should be clean and tidy, and there should be in readiness a table, a linen cloth, a crucifix, two candles, two tumblers or glasses (one containing holy water, the other ordinary drinking water), two saucers, some cotton-wool, and a few crumbs of bread (or salt). The relations or friends and neighbors of the sick person should make it their business to see that the sick person receives Extreme Unction betimes and that the necessary preparations are made for its administration; if they do this they may hope to be rewarded by being themselves fortified in their last hour by the sacraments which the Church has provided. Amen.

SERMON XLII

On Holy Orders

"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God" (*Heb.* v. 1).

In our explanations on the sacrament of Holy Orders we will follow the method we have already adopted in former instructions, and consider one by one the three elements necessary to constitute this, as well as every other sacrament.

I. The outward sign.
II. The inward grace.
III. The institution by Christ.

I

What is the outward sign in the sacrament of Holy Orders? It is the imposition of hands and the prayer of the bishop.

The minister of Holy Orders is a bishop only; no one else, not even the most saintly divine, or the most powerful king, has the right to administer this sacrament; and if they tried to arrogate to themselves the right to ordain priests the ordination would not be valid. On whom does the bishop impose hands? On a cleric who has already received the six orders preparatory to the priesthood, who has proved himself to possess the necessary amount of learning, the morality of whose life has been tested, and who earnestly desires to be ordained.

How is the sacrament of Holy Orders administered? The bishop, after certain prescribed forms of prayers have been gone through, and before the beginning of Mass, lays both his hands silently on the head of each one of those who are going to be ordained; and all the priests who are present do the same. Then, each one extends his right hand over those to whom the sacrament is being administered, and the bishop prays over each one as follows: "Hearken to us, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, and pour down on these Thy servants the blessing of the Holy Ghost and the power of priestly grace, that Thou mayest ever bestow the unfailing abundance of Thy gift on those whom we now present for consecration to the eyes of Thy loving-kindness." It is in the imposition of hands and the prayer of the bishop, as we have described above, that the outward sign primarily and essentially consists in the sacrament of Holy Orders. But there are still quite a number of outward ceremonies which are never omitted and which must not be omitted. The newly consecrated priests receive their priestly vestments; the stole and the chasuble are handed to them, while prayers prescribed by the Church are said. Then follows the anointing of hands, the delivery of the chalice with the wine, and of the paten with the host, while the bishop says: "Take thou the authority to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses, both for the living and the dead." Finally, at the end of the Mass, the bishop again lays his hands upon them, and prays: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you

shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained."

Therefore, it is clear that, although accompanied, preceded, and followed by a number of ceremonies and ceremonials, the outward sign of the sacrament of Holy Orders consists in the imposition of hands and the prayer of the bishop.

II

Let us ask, in the second place, what grace does the sacrament of Holy Orders impart? First, it increases sanctifying grace; second, it bestows the powers of the priesthood, and imprints the indelible mark of ordination on the soul; third, it bestows a special grace to enable those who receive it to discharge in a fitting manner their priestly office.

(1) It increases sanctifying grace. You will all agree that it is desirable, though perhaps not indispensable, that an officer should be superior to his men in size and strength. In the same way, it is desirable that a priest should be more richly endowed with grace than the flock entrusted to him. Therefore, it is but just and fitting that the reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders should carry with it an increased measure of sanctifying grace.

(2) The greatest effect of Holy Orders is to bestow the powers of the priesthood, and to imprint an indelible mark on the souls of those who receive it.

In what do the powers of the priesthood consist? Principally in the power to say Mass and

to administer the sacraments. In other words, a priest has power over the real and the mystical body of Christ.

A priest has power over the real body of Christ when he says Mass, or dispenses holy communion. St. Joseph had power over the real body of Christ. It is said of him: "He took the Child and His Mother." Mary also had power over His body; she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done unto me according to Thy word." By so speaking she allowed the Son of God to take flesh within her, and after the birth of the Saviour she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. The power of the priest is not less than this. Once he speaks the words of consecration, the real body of Christ is in his hands, to carry, lift up, or lay down with an exercise of power equal to that of Mary and Joseph.

Holy Orders gives him power also over Christ's mystical body. The mystical body of Christ is the communion of all faithful Christians on earth. The priest increases the growth of this body, by giving it new members in holy Baptism, by nourishing and feeding these new members of the body of Christ with holy communion, healing them in the sacrament of Penance when they are sick, and strengthening and preparing them for their passage to eternal life by Extreme Unction. It is true to say that Holy Orders gives the priest power over the real and the mystical body of Christ.

These are, indeed, great powers, exceeding anything earthly, and greater than those of the

angels themselves. The crowning glory of these privileges is that, once given, they can never be withdrawn; for they are accompanied by an indelible badge of honor, the spiritual and ineffaceable "character" of ordination.

From this you can see the greatness of the powers of the priest, which extend to all that is highest in heaven, the body of Christ on the throne of God; to everything that is most precious on earth, the soul of man; to that which is buried deepest in hell, sin. The power of the priest is in proportion to his dignity. Do not, therefore, be surprised that the Fathers of the Church speak of the dignity of the priesthood in such exalted language. The catechism of the Council of Trent says: "It is such as can not be comprehended by the human mind; still less is it equalled by, or comparable with, anything on earth."

This dignity goes hand in hand with a great charge and a grave responsibility, and the priest at his consecration receives not only the power, but all the graces necessary to enable him to make a right use of it.

III

Our last point is to prove that Holy Orders is a sacrament really instituted by Christ. One thing is certain, namely, that as long as the Church has existed Holy Orders has been in use as a sacrament of the New Law. Evidences of this are so numerous that I will not attempt to go through them all, or I should never come to an end; and this one fact is ample proof that the

sacrament of Holy Orders was instituted by Christ; for the Church would not have taught and administered a sacrament which He had not instituted. All the heresies by which men fell away from the Church before the sixteenth century retained—an inheritance from their Mother—a priesthood similar to that of the Catholic Church. It was only in the sixteenth century that we first hear of its being dispensed with, and that the theory that every Christian is a priest and possesses equal powers gained ground. The words of St. Peter, addressed to all the faithful, were quoted: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation." These words may be taken quite as well to mean that all men are kings, as that all men are priests; one interpretation is quite as foolish as the other.

Christ Himself chose His apostles. It was not to all men, but to them only that He addressed the words: "As the Father sent Me, so I also send you"; to them only that He said: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." To His apostles only, and not to the Christian community at large, He said: "Do this for a commemoration of Me." The apostles, in their turn, appointed their successors; St. Paul and St. Barnabas were installed in their priestly office with prayer and imposition of hands. Holy Scripture says: "And when they had ordained to them priests in every Church, and had prayed with them fasting, they commended them to the Lord." St. Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy, whom he had himself consecrated: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is

in thee by the imposition of my hands"; and further on he warns the same disciple to exercise care in ordaining others for the sacred ministry: "Impose not hands lightly on any man." We find, therefore, that the councils of the Church, the teaching of the Fathers, the different heresies, the apostles, and Christ Himself bear witness that Holy Orders is a sacrament of the New Law.

Let us thank our Saviour very earnestly for instituting the priesthood, by which the uninterrupted offering of the Holy Sacrifice and the continual dispensation of the sacraments is made possible. Without a priesthood the Church must perish. Honor, therefore, the person of the priest on account of the dignity of his mission, and of the great responsibility which rests upon him. It is to your own interest to do so, for you will always find that in those villages and districts, where there is reverence for the priest, religion and morality are in a good state; where the priest is despised and ridiculed, religion and morality are almost invariably at a low ebb. We should pray fervently that God may raise up good priests for His Church, who will combine earnest labor in His vineyard with great purity of life. Be on your guard against speaking ill of a priest. Calumny is always a grave sin, but to calumniate a priest is to cause a grievous scandal. To take away the character of another is always an evil thing, even when what we say is true; but to reveal the faults, the true faults, it may be, of a priest without necessity is to do a double harm, for to no one is his good name of more importance than to a priest. Emperor Constantine is

reported to have said that he would cover the sins of a priest with his mantle to hide them; and the apostle St. Paul wrote: "Let the priests that rule well be especially worthy of double honor; especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Amen.

SERMON XLIII

On the Origin and the Original Character of Marriage

"God blessed them saying: Increase and multiply and fill the earth" (*Gen.* i. 28).

Last Sunday we considered very briefly the sacrament of Holy Orders; we must devote a longer time to the sacrament of Matrimony, because it is one which intimately concerns every one of us. Recollections of the home of our childhood, of our father and mother, brothers and sisters will remain with us as long as we live; let our later experiences be what they may, the influence of our early education, of our mother's love and blessing will never be quite effaced; it is from marriage, from the family, that the individual springs. Matrimony is specially important for many of us, because most people, though not all, are called to marriage; the vocation to virginity is the exception, married life is the rule. It is a question of great importance for the State, for it is the means by which the inroads made in the population by death are repaired. The family is the image, one might almost say the type, and at the same time the source, of the State. The question of marriage is also an important one for the Church, which attaches rich blessings to the married state, protects it by the strictest laws, and sees in this sacrament a type

of the union that exists between Christ and His Church.

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will begin our instructions on the subject of marriage by considering:

I. The origin of marriage.
II. Its original characteristics.

I

Marriage was instituted by God in Paradise. "God created man to His own image, to the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." When the power of God created the difference of sex, marriage was not yet instituted; but the foundations of it were laid. Its institution by God is clearly indicated in the following words, which God spoke immediately before the creation of Eve: "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a helpmate like unto himself." Eve was, therefore, created to be the helpmate of Adam. God Himself brought Eve to Adam, and blessed their union, saying: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." God founded the married state as we have said; He Himself consecrated the first marriage.

If God did not institute marriage, by whom, then, was it instituted? At all times and among all peoples, civilized as well as uncivilized, marriage has always existed. Where would a man have been found powerful enough to impose such a custom upon the whole human race, and to uphold it during so many hundreds, or rather thousands, of years. God alone possesses such power.

II

The history of the institution of marriage includes and clearly expresses the three great qualities of marriage. Matrimony as a sacrament of the New Law has the qualities of unity, of indissolubility, and of sanctity, which were also the characteristics of the first marriage in Paradise.

(a) The quality of unity. Marriage is the union of one man with one woman. This was true of the first marriage in Paradise, and is accentuated by the fact that God created only one man and one woman and joined them together with His blessing. It is clear also from the words which Adam, inspired by God, spoke on the occasion of his marriage: "Wherefore shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh"—two, not three or four or several. It is as clear to our intelligence as the noon-day sun that the ends of marriage are best attained by the union of one man with one woman, and of one woman with one man only. Under these conditions conjugal affection is more lasting and more intense; the children are loved more tenderly, their good education better secured, and surer provision made for them; the peace and unity of a family is more unbroken when one father and one mother stand at the head of it, than were one man and many women, or, what can hardly bear thinking about, were one woman and several men to hold the reins of government. That human passion has but too often disturbed the unity of marriage is unhappily true; passion takes but little account of the rulings of the understanding. But, if it is clear

even to our feeble intelligence that unity in marriage is the best thing, we must take for granted that this is what God willed and decreed when He instituted marriage. It is true that under the Old Law many of the patriarchs had several wives; we can only suppose that in some way or another they were justified in doing so; perhaps until marriage became a sacrament unity in marriage, although clearly indicated, was not prescribed as a definite law.

(b) The second quality of marriage is indissolubility. The catechism tells us that, "The bond of Christian marriage can not be dissolved by any human power." Death alone can undo it. This was true of the first marriage instituted by God in Paradise. Adam said: "A man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife." Now, the tie of a child to its parents is not only very sweet and tender, but it is one that binds so strongly and securely as to be almost unbreakable; but that of husband and wife is a still closer, more intimate, more lasting bond; once it is entered upon it tears all others asunder, even that of parent and child: "A man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife." You may perhaps say that these words of Adam had reference only to his own union with Eve, and do not apply to subsequent marriages. But I would point out that it is only to subsequent marriages that they can apply. "A man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife." Adam had no father or mother, therefore he could not have left them to cleave to his wife; it was his children and descendants who were to do so when they

entered the married state. Or, will you say, that to take Adam's words as meaning that the bond of marriage lasts till death, is to interpret them too strictly? Our Saviour Himself understood them in this way. When the Pharisees questioned Him as to the causes for which a man might lawfully put away his wife, what did He answer? "Moses, by reason of the hardness of your heart, permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." In its first origin in Paradise marriage bore the characteristics of unity and indissolubility.

(c) The third characteristic of marriage is its sanctity. That marriage should be holy under the New Law, when it has been raised to the dignity of a sacrament, is comprehensible; but it was holy even under the Old Law. The word "holy" may be used in many different senses. A thing may be called holy because it comes direct from God; we call marriage holy because it was instituted by God Himself in the Garden of Eden. A thing may be called holy that serves to the glory of God, even if it is in itself profane. The oath is a sacred and holy thing, though it is made use of in a secular tribunal for secular purposes by secular people. In the same way, Matrimony, though in one sense a purely secular contract, is a holy thing, because if used in the right way it serves to the glory of God. Everything that serves to the realization of the divine plans and intentions is holy. So we call marriage holy because it helps to increase the number of God's elect, and contributes to the development of the

human race. Things are called holy that bear a holy meaning. There is nothing more holy than the union of Christ and His Church; marriage was, even under the Old Law, a type and figure of this union. That which is specially blessed by God is holy; the first marriage in Paradise had God's benediction upon it. Even in Paradise marriage had the original qualities of unity, indissolubility, and sanctity. Amen.

SERMON XLIV

On the Outward Sign and the Inward Grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

MARRIAGE, as it was primarily ordained by God in Paradise, bore upon it the characteristics of unity, of indissolubility, and of sanctity; but, in the course of time, it lost its original dignity. Polygamy became general; divorce was permitted almost at will on the most frivolous grounds; marriage was no longer looked upon as a holy thing, but merely as an arrangement for the gratification of sensuality and caprice. This was so with the Gentiles, and even with the Jews themselves. Then Christ came and restored Matrimony to its original institution, and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament.

We learn from our catechism that "the sacrament of Matrimony is the sacrament which unites a Christian man and woman in lawful marriage." And also that it bestows special graces on those who receive it to bear the difficulties of their state. These answers assume the existence of two of the three things, which, as we have already repeatedly heard, are essential to a sacrament:

I. The outward sign.
II. The inward grace.

We will consider these two points as shortly as possible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The outward sign of matrimony consists in a Christian bride and bridegroom binding themselves to each other in the closest possible union. But how is this union effected? I answer: By the contracting parties themselves, when they declare before their parish priest and two witnesses that they take each other in marriage. It is essential that it be in the presence of their parish-priest (or a priest delegated by him), also that there be two witnesses, and that the bride and bridegroom themselves declare that they take each other as husband and wife. No prescribed form of words is necessary to do this; all that is essential is that the meaning and intention be clearly expressed. After the declaration has been made the priest blesses their union. It is this bond of marriage which constitutes the outward sign of the sacrament of Matrimony.

This intimate bond of union which joins people together in the sacrament of Matrimony is an outward sign, which has a very sacred significance. What does it signify? Let us hear from St. Paul, who in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians emphasizes the duty of the wife to be subject to her husband, as the Church is subject to Christ, and calls upon husbands to love their wives, as Christ also loves His Church. He quotes the words of Adam that a man should forsake father and mother and cleave only to his wife. Finally, he ends with these words: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." The apostle means to say the bond of Christian marriage is a holy thing, a

great mystery. Why? Because it is a figure of the union which exists between Christ and His Church: "But I speak in Christ and in the Church." The marriage contract does in truth possess this significance.

Christian marriage has the mark of unity; a man is joined to one wife, this is an invariable rule. There is but one Christ, the only-begotten incarnate Son of God, and He founded but a single Church, and united Himself to her as His chosen bride, for all time, till the end of the world, and will be united to her yet more closely in eternity.

The union of marriage is a true partnership; the husband is the head of the wife, and the wife is subject to the husband. Here we have a further point of resemblance. Christ is the head of the Church, who obeys His laws in all things.

Christian marriage is indissoluble. Once a marriage is validly celebrated and duly consummated no power on earth, neither king nor emperor, bishop or Pope, has power to dissolve it. The married pair are joined in such a way that only the hand of God can undo the tie that binds them, by removing one of them by death. This is a beautiful picture of the bond that exists between Christ and His Church. Christ will never forsake His Church: "Behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world." The Church will never separate herself from Christ; she has been true to Him through centuries of bloody persecution, of heresy and apostasy, and she will remain faithful through the days of Antichrist.

Marriage is a union of a very close and intimate nature; husband and wife rejoice and suffer together, a wife shares in the good or bad repute of her husband, while a husband looks upon his wife's honor as his own; she even takes her husband's name, follows him wherever he goes, and they live together in community of goods and possessions. There have been instances of wives who, when their husbands have been condemned to exile and imprisonment, have elected to go with them and share their captivity. A beautiful picture of the union that exists between Christ and His Church—Christ allows His Church full participation in His infallibility, His possessions, the treasures of His grace, and His incorruptible glory. He loves His Church; the Church bears His name and loves Him in return; His honor is hers; she takes her part of His cross, His sufferings, His shame. She follows Him through the centuries on the road to Calvary, so that she may share His glory in the life to come. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The bond of marriage bears the mark of holiness. Its holy purpose is to add to the numbers of God's reasonable creation, to complete the ranks of God's children. Again, a wonderful figure of the union of Christ and His Church. Christ instituted His Church, and united Himself to her, that the number of His elect might be full. Christ was the Lamb who alone had power to loosen the seven seals of the Book that contained the names of the elect.

"This is a great mystery, but I speak in Christ

and in the Church." Marriage may be considered, indeed, as the type and figure of a great mystery, when one contemplates how exact and deeply engraved is the resemblance it bears to the union of Christ and His Church.

II

We may go a step further and assert boldly that Matrimony is not only the type and figure of a very holy thing, but that it is in itself a holy thing, rich in grace, giving to those who receive it worthily, not only at the time of its actual reception, but all during the course of their married life, the means to be faithful till death to the duties of their state.

It requires only very little thought to understand the reason for this. For all states and for every different condition of life special grace-giving sacraments have been provided by our Saviour. Baptism was instituted to make us Christians, and to enable us to lead a Christian life; as soldiers of Christ, Confirmation supplies us with the weapons necessary to carry on our spiritual warfare; the Sacrament of the Altar enables the just to advance in virtue; Penance heals the various ills and wounds of the soul; Extreme Unction enables the dying to bring the great final struggle to a successful issue; the priest receives strength from the sacrament of Holy Orders to make a right use of the great powers conferred on him. Married people may well ask: "Is not our state one of difficulty? Is it not Christian? Is it not holy—so holy that it is an image of the union of Christ and His

Church? Are we to receive no special graces? Is it such an easy matter to be faithful all through life, to fulfill till old age in joy and in sorrow the duties of the married state? The grace of God is as necessary to us as to any other class of Christians. Ours is a holy state. It is but just that Matrimony should be a sacrament of the New Law."

The teaching of Scripture brings us to the conclusion that we have already reached by calm reflection. It calls marriage a gift, which means a grace. The very fact that Matrimony is a type of the union between Christ and His Church involves those two attributes which constitute its whole difficulty and which are inseparable from Christian marriage, namely, unity and indissolubility. For this reason Christ and His Church bestow special graces to lighten this yoke and to make it easier to bear.

Such has always been the view taken by the Church, and her teaching and practice have been in accordance with this attitude. If marriage is a great mystery great graces must be connected with it. St. Augustine says that by the words: "In the city of God upon His holy mount," which is the Church, "we are invited to honor not only the tie of marriage, but also the sacrament of Matrimony." Marriage signifies grace and imparts grace. It is, as the Council of Trent says, a sacrament in the strict and proper sense of the word, and, this being so, no proof is needed that it was instituted by Jesus Christ. We find, therefore, in Matrimony the three things necessary to constitute a sacrament: the outward sign,

the inward grace, and the institution by Jesus Christ. It is a real and a great sacrament. Baptism may be called a great sacrament in its effects. The Blessed Sacrament is great by reason of what it contains; Matrimony is great on account of what it symbolizes. "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." Amen.

SERMON XLV

On the Duties of Married People

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

As we have already seen, the bride and bridegroom receive in the sacrament of Matrimony the grace to remain faithful to their duty till death. If we want to learn more about the graces conferred by this sacrament, we must first form a clear idea of the duties of married people, for the grace given corresponds with and is proportionate to what is required of them.

Let us, therefore, ask what are the duties of married people. Married people should (1) live with each other in peace, love, and conjugal fidelity till death parts them; (2) they should give each other mutual edification by the holiness of their lives; (3) they should strive together to bring up their children in the fear of God; (4) the husband should treat his wife with kindness, supporting and cherishing her; the wife should obey her husband in all that is just and right. These four duties may be divided into two classes: (1) the duties which husband and wife owe each other; (2) the duties which they owe their children.

In this instruction we will confine ourselves to those duties which husband and wife owe each other and which are all comprised in these words of St. Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, as

Christ also loved the Church." If such love as the apostle refers to is forthcoming on both sides then the duties of married life will be faithfully fulfilled. Such love must be:

I. Spiritual.
II. Supernatural.
III. Self-sacrificing.
IV. Constant.

Let us, with the help of the Holy Ghost, examine these four qualities of conjugal love.

I

The love of married people should be of a spiritual nature, and not a mere sensual, carnal passion, which depends on youth, bodily beauty and charm, in short, on whatever attracts the eye and appeals to the senses. Love of this kind is nowadays everywhere described, in novels, songs, plays, and stories; it is exalted and praised as the best thing life has to offer, the source of all happiness, the thing most worth striving for. It is looked upon as something holy, a virtue even which justifies every disregard of the rights of parents and the voice of reason, which excuses men for breaking through the bounds and restrictions set by religion, by morals, by delicacy, age, or condition; which may, in fact, do anything and everything to reach the desired end and attain nearer union with the beloved one. But such a picture is false, and brings terrible misery on those who accept it as a true one. Sensuality is something animal; like excessive drinking, it at first makes a man sing and rejoice, but in the

end it produces disgust and nausea. Sensual love disappears when youth is past, when the hand of time has left its mark on the pretty face, and turned the bright hair gray; when reason shows that the beautiful body contains an ugly soul, that charming manners are a cloak to depraved morals, or when fresher and younger faces captivate the imagination. Sensual love is quite as potent a factor in dividing married people as it is in drawing them together.

For this reason we emphatically say that conjugal love must not be purely sensual. No doubt married people may pay proper regard to those things which further the ends for which marriage was instituted; this must be so, and was so ordained. But the foundation of their love must, in the first place, be a spiritual one; it must rest on grounds of mutual respect, on similarity of disposition, equality of station, on agreement in matters of religion and morality. This is a better, a deeper, a surer foundation than the mere physical attraction inspired by a beautiful face.

II

The love of married people should be a spiritual love. Just as a missionary loves the souls of the pagans to whom he is preaching, desiring nothing so ardently as to bring them out of the darkness of paganism to the light of Christian faith; just as a priest loves the faithful entrusted to him, and for this reason tries to win them for heaven; or as a confessor loves his penitents and is ready to make allowances for all their faults, so should a man love his wife, and a wife her

husband. Each should wish nothing more earnestly than to help the other to work out his or her salvation, and should be willing to bear and to forgive everything, in order that both may attain eternal life. This is supernatural love. If married people love each other in this way they will pray for each other, and be on their guard never to be an occasion of sin to one another. They will strive to give each other mutual edification, and travel hand in hand on the road to heaven, helping, inspiring, encouraging, and consoling one another. Such love will lighten the steepness and difficulties of the long road, and will at least prevent either of the pair from ever drawing the other into evil. We must lay well to heart, for it is true, that a husband and wife are, as a rule, lost or saved together; their eternal welfare, like their temporal interests, are bound together by the closest possible of ties.

III

The mutual love of husband and wife must be self-sacrificing; it must be, so to speak, active. St. Paul says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church." How has Christ loved the Church? With a self-sacrificing love. How much that is painful has He not endured for her! Uncomplainingly He bore the shame of the cross, carrying it up the mountain of Calvary, where, nailed to it, He shed the last drop of His blood and gave His life for His Church. Conjugal love, too, must be ready to sacrifice itself to endure fatigues, to face hard work, to expend every penny of money, to devote every moment of the

day and of the night, if duty requires it. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved His Church." If you do, no work will seem to you too hard, no exertion too great, no sacrifice too costly. Wives, you must love your husbands, as the Church loves Christ, her bridegroom; then you will not grudge the labor and trouble necessary to keep the home bright and clean and attractive, but you will make it a perfect temple of domestic happiness.

Love that is self-sacrificing will show itself by the patience with which it will bear suffering. The providence of God has ordained that in married life the sweet and the bitter are closely intermingled—one partner can cause the other much sorrow. How bitter for a wife to be obliged to witness outbursts of violent anger on the part of her husband, to see him under the influence of drink, to know him unfaithful! How sad for a husband to have a wife who neglects her household, who is quarrelsome, vain, extravagant, perhaps even dissolute! Yet true love will overlook all faults and failings when they are of a trifling nature; will reprove them gently when they are grave; will bear with them patiently when they are beyond correction; this is a task which only true love can perform: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely."

Sorrow comes from the children, too; what suffering they cause their parents, sick or well, whether they live or whether they die, both while they are little and when they grow up! These are sorrows which conjugal love must be prepared to bear.

Then there are the sorrows sent or permitted by the providence of God: loss of fortune, business troubles, inability of the husband to provide for his family, illness, decay, and old age; finally, death, which comes to separate those who have so long traveled the road of life together.

When we contemplate all these sorrows and troubles we are no longer surprised at the number of unhappy marriages, or that divorce becomes more and more frequent; we can not even wonder that suicide is so often resorted to as a means of escape from an unhappy married life.

Only real self-sacrificing love, such love as "redoubleth joys and cutteth griefs in half," can enable married people to fulfill their difficult and often painful duties: "Love believeth all things, hopeth all things, beareth all things, endureth all things."

IV

The love of husband and wife must be constant, lasting through the years till death; not growing less when youth and beauty are past, for time, that universal destroyer, must have no power over it. It should be such a love as will admit of no thought, or look, or wish, or desire, much less any act contrary to conjugal fidelity. O dearly beloved brethren, if only married people were faithful and true in their love for one another there would be no reason even to mention such a word as adultery; they would be lifted as high as the stars above that abyss.

Consider the wrong done to the husband or wife by the sin of adultery, the wrong done to

their children, to the sacrament of Matrimony and the grace it gives; the offence offered to Christ and His Church, whose union is symbolized by marriage. "Do not err," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators . . . nor adulterers . . . shall possess the kingdom of God." Do not err; your adultery may not be known to men, but it is not hidden from God. Do not err; men may make little of it, but God looks upon it as a grievous sin. Do not err; if you hope, in spite of your adultery, to enter the kingdom of heaven, remember that as long as you are unrepentant you can never possess it.

Married people, therefore, owe one another love —spiritual, supernatural, self-sacrificing, constant love. The grace of the sacrament is given them that they may love each other as Christ loves His Church. If they love in this way, then peace, which is the best thing on earth, will dwell in their homes; they will be truly united, two souls and one mind; two hearts beating together in unison. Their joys will be doubled, their sorrows will be halved, and, better than all, their married life will be for them a school of virtue, a means of sanctification, a preparation for eternal life. Amen.

SERMON XLVI

On the Duty of Married People to Bring up Their Children

"And you fathers . . . bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord" (*Eph.* vi. 4).

We heard in our last instruction that married people, as a result of their mutual love, have important duties to one another; they owe each other constant fidelity, good example, and self-sacrificing help.

In addition to this they have duties to fulfill toward their children, especially that of bringing them up in the fear of God. With the help of the Holy Spirit we will consider:

I. Why this is a duty.
II. How it may and must be performed.

I

Why must married people bring up their children in the fear of God? Because this is due (1) to God, (2) to the children, (3) to the Church and to society.

It is due to God. Parents who have in their souls the least spark of faith, the least trace of religious feeling, or who even think the matter over intelligently, will look upon their children as gifts from God, a treasure entrusted by God to their care, talents with which they must trade for interest, immortal souls created for an eternal end which their parents must help them to attain.

What is this end? Is it that they may be healthy and grow big and strong? That is important, but it is not the principal thing. Is it that they may know how to hold their own in the struggle of life, and obtain the prizes and honors of this world? Again, this is not the principal thing. The principal thing is that they may become citizens of heaven, for if they fail in this it would have been better for them never to have been born. Therefore, it is the duty of parents to help their children to gain eternal happiness.

This is due to God; but it is due also to the children. Parents love their children, and wish good things for them and do them all the good they can. What have they power to do for them? They can not ensure them health or long life, money or possessions. I once heard a father say: "I have very little to leave my children, but I will see that they learn something by which they can provide for themselves." That is all very well, but, to my mind, it would be better to say: "I can not give my children the happiness of this world, but whatever comes I will take care they do not miss their eternal happiness." "What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul."

It is something due to the Church and to society that children should be well brought up. The ranks of Church and State alike are being constantly broken into by death, while the gaps thus created are filled again by fresh births and souls newly baptized. Now, no one has so much influence over these new citizens, these newly baptized members of the Church, as the parents; their

influence is the first, the strongest, the most lasting. It is a blessing for the Church when her members from their earliest infancy drink in with their mother's milk the teachings of faith, and are accustomed from childhood to the strict observance of the commandments; it is a blessing for the State when its members are trained in habits of obedience—of work; when they recognize in their parents and in all rightly-constituted authority a power from above. The impressions of youth and of childhood are deeper than any others, and last the longest: "A young man according to his way; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (*Prov.* xxii. 6).

II

No doubt, you say to me, it is undeniably the duty of parents to bring up their children in the fear of God. This is quite clear; but it is not such a simple matter to do it. Here we have the second point of our instruction. Thousands of books, good and bad, large and small have been written on the bringing up of children. I will merely attempt to point out, as it were, the four pillars on which the whole structure ought to rest.

The first pillar is early teaching and the early formation of good habits. It is laid down in all books dealing with the subject that at the first dawn of intelligence in a human being his heart should be raised to God in faith and hope and love. The earliest glimmer of reason, as well as the last operations of the human mind, should be consecrated to God. This being so, it is clearly the right thing for parents to see that their child

becomes familiar with the sacred names of God, of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and that the first thought he utters is a prayer. How beautiful it is when a child learns from the lips of his mother the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the ten commandments of God, the commandments of the Church; when his father, as opportunity arises, says to him: "That is right, the other is wrong; this is good, the other is bad"—in this way sowing in the infant's heart the first seeds of virtue and morality, and laying the foundation of justice.

The second pillar of a Christian education is the example, the good example which parents give their children. So much depends upon it, that one might almost say *everything* depends on it. What is the reason that children are able to speak their mother tongue quite fluently at the early age of four, five, or six years of age? It is the result of example. Day by day they listen to their parents and their brothers and sisters talking, and unconsciously, without trouble and without any teaching, they reproduce the sounds made by their elders. But do not think that the influence of example is felt only in this matter of speech; it has an equally powerful effect on forming conduct and habits of prayer. If from their infancy onward children are always accustomed to see their parents devout and zealous in prayer, diligent at their work, sparing in their expenditure, reserved in speech, moderate in eating and drinking, peaceable in all their ways, charitable to the poor, patient in suffering, regular in going to Church—when children, I say, grow up in such an atmosphere as this, then they will

become good, God-fearing men and women. But if at home they hear nothing but quarreling, and cursing, and swearing, if they have to listen to indecent and unbridled language, if they see that their parents do not pray, and that out of laziness and to avoid rising early they never go to Mass; if they observe that they eat meat on abstinence days whenever it suits them and constantly offend against temperance and modesty; when, in a word, instead of a good example they have a bad example constantly before their eyes, all the teaching and warnings and recommendations given at school will count for nothing. The children, in the course of time, will be worse than the parents.

Many a father and mother will think in their hearts, "What can our example do against the wickedness of the outside world? Even if we set them a good example at home, once they begin to mix with others at school, or at play, or at work, even what they may see in the streets will be enough to undermine all the good that has been built up with so much trouble." It is true, the dangers that await them are very great; but what ought to follow from this? It follows that on this very account parents should strive to set so holy an example to their children as to overshadow all the evil with which they may later come in contact; they must imprint early on the hearts of their little ones so deep and so thorough a picture of true virtue, that it will protect and shield them from the dangers which lie in wait for them.

The third pillar of a good education is punish-

ment. The heart of man is prone to evil from his youth, and the seeds of passion, inclination to anger, to laziness, to disobedience, to lying, a tendency to be headstrong, revengeful, quarrelsome, show themselves in earliest infancy. Punishment is necessary to root out these weeds. At first a reproof, a severe look, a serious word may be tried; but if it proves of no avail then punishment must be resorted to, and it should not be delayed too long, for a young tree is easily bent. On the question of punishment parents should be of one mind; the father should not defend the child when the mother has cause to complain of it, nor should the mother hold back when the father sees fit to be severe. Do not be too softhearted in this matter; it is better that a child should cry for being punished than that parents should have to weep over the wickedness of their children. Children's tears are quickly dried, but not so those which parents shed over the wrongdoing of their sons and daughters; such tears are bitter, indeed, and flow long and abundantly. Am I advising parents to use the rod? Why not, if it is necessary? If it were possible by whipping them to make stupid children clever, or poor children rich, or sick children strong and healthy, I think no house would be without a rod. The rod has no such power; but it can, if used with discretion, make bad children good; it can draw back from the road to hell those who are in danger of being lost, and can put them once more safely on the road that leads to heaven. I am not overstating the case. Scripture says: "Thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from hell."

The last, but not the least, of the pillars of a good education is prayer. Children are taught in Church and at school that they must pray for their parents. This duty is a reciprocal one; children should pray for their parents, and parents should pray for their children. They should pray for their children before they can pray for themselves; they should pray with them as soon as they have learned to pray; they should go on praying for them even if they themselves have given up their habits of prayer. There comes a time when children have learned to be independent, and the commands and warnings of their parents have no weight. But prayer always tells; it is the first, the last, the most important, and the most lasting means of education. Therefore, pray for your children, whether they be boys or girls, whether you have many or few, whether they be young or old, at home or abroad, in service, in the army, in the field, whether they be good or bad, and even though they may have departed ever so far from the teaching and traditions of their parents. Your work of education should be preceded, accompanied, and followed up by prayer. Prayer will bring a blessing on your efforts, and will supply the defects and deficiencies which may creep in even into the wisest method of bringing up children.

The four pillars of education are, teaching, example, punishment, prayer. No home is too small to contain them. Dear Christian parents, remember these truths and act accordingly. Then you will find that even to-day it is possible to have God-fearing children growing up round you; your

children will be your greatest treasure, and will do you credit in the eyes of others; they will be the joy of your life, the support of your old age, your comfort at death, and your crown for all eternity. Amen.

SERMON XLVII

On Courtships and Engagements

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

We have devoted only a very short time to considering the duties which married people owe to each other and to their children. We will now turn our attention to the precautions which should be attended to if we wish to make a good and happy marriage.

Those who intend to enter the married state should bear in mind (1) that they should not engage themselves thoughtlessly; (2) that they should be fully instructed and be sure that there are no impediments to their marriage; (3) that during their engagement they must live innocently; (4) that they should marry with a pure and holy intention; (5) that before their marriage they should make a good confession and worthily receive holy communion.

Some of these points will require to be explained more fully than others; to-day we will deal exclusively with the first, namely, that people should not engage themselves thoughtlessly; from this there arises a second proposition which we will couple with it, that courtships should not be entered upon thoughtlessly. An ill-considered engagement is the door to an unhappy marriage, but undesirable acquaintances lead to ill-considered engagements. Let us, therefore, think carefully

over these two points, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

Those who intend to enter the married state should not engage themselves thoughtlessly. When two unmarried people come to an agreement to take each other in marriage, or when one of them gives a promise of marriage which is accepted by the other it constitutes an engagement. This is the greatest and most solemn undertaking into which it is possible for a man to enter, and so serious are the consequences involved that it is of the utmost importance for people to bind themselves only after full and mature deliberation.

You will ask, when is an engagement ill-considered and foolish. I will answer you briefly: It is foolish and ill-considered when there is no prospect of marriage, or when there is no prospect of a happy marriage, or when it is entered into without any intention of marriage at all. Judge for yourselves.

(a) It is foolish to enter into an engagement which offers no prospect of marriage. Two young people get engaged to be married, although they know, or could and ought to know, that their marriage would not be allowed by the laws of the Church or of the State, that it would be against the wishes of their parents and friends, that there exist differences of station and religion between them which can not be bridged over, in a word, that there is an insurmountable mass of difficulties in the way of their union. What sense is there

in getting engaged under such circumstances? As well might two people enter into an undertaking to give each other the moon; the laws of Church and State, differences of station and of religion are real things, which are far more stable and binding in their nature than the fancy or passion or vows of two young people in love. Ah, you say, but true love has often been successful in the course of time in overcoming all obstacles. Yes, no doubt, this happens sometimes, but not always. If, therefore, it is on lapse of time that you count to make marriage possible, would it not be wiser to delay the engagement, as well as the wedding?

(b) Engagements are foolish when they are made without any prospect of a happy marriage. To walk with open eyes and of one's own free will to destruction is surely foolish. What could be more foolish? Now, what likelihood of happiness in marriage can there be for two people who become engaged without reference to the will of God, and without considering, in the first place, if they are called to the married state at all; who neglect to ask themselves if they are in a position to provide for a family, or if they are qualified in any way to bring up children; who disregard such questions as their own capacity for conjugal fidelity, their physical fitness for marriage; who do not trouble to inquire into the religious belief, the morals, the character of the person they are going to marry. How can two people hope to be happy who become engaged independently of the guidance of Almighty God, in opposition to the advice of their parents, against

the voice of conscience, even in spite of their own reason—purely from motives of passion. In such an engagement there is no foundation either for the temporal or the eternal happiness of those who enter into it.

(c) Clearly, it is foolish to enter into an engagement when one or other of the contracting parties, or even both of them, have no serious intention of marriage. What name does such an engagement deserve? It is a dishonorable trick by which one or the other is deceived and duped. It is generally a cloak covering improper relations; it is destructive of innocence and never leads to a happy marriage—though often to a broken heart. All engagements are foolish which are entered upon without intention of marriage, with no prospect of marriage, or with no prospect of a *happy* marriage.

II

It will be of little use to warn people against imprudent engagements unless at the same time we try to dam the source and fountain-head from which they spring, namely, foolish and undesirable friendships and flirtations, in other words, from foolish courtships.

Courtships are foolish that are too quickly made or which last too long, or which are of too intimate a character.

Too quickly made—what would you say to a schoolboy who demanded deadly weapons to play with, and wanted to join the army, and go to war? You would tell him his place was at a school desk and not on a battle-field, and instead of fire-

arms you would give him a wooden sword to play with. What is one to say when youths little more than boys, and girls who have barely left school—young people, who, though old enough to commit sin, are far too young to think of marrying—when such young people, I say, come together and seek each other out, making appointments to meet, to correspond, in a word, to keep company and behave like engaged people? What can one say to them? Such connections are the ruin of youth, the grave of innocence, an enticement to sin, and often enough they bring shame and disgrace on the families where they are tolerated.

Courtships that go on too long are equally foolish. No one, of course, could expect a young man to lead to the altar a girl he has never seen, to whom he has never spoken, who does not know him and whom he does not know. No reasonable person would contest that a certain amount of intercourse must precede an engagement, but is necessary before the marriage takes place. A steeplejack takes a certain amount of risk every time he mounts a steeple; he runs this risk because there is important work to be done, but he does not spend more time in doing it than is necessary; neither does he work in the darkness of night, or in stormy weather. Now, a man who seriously contemplates matrimony must make acquaintances; but this stage should not last longer than is necessary to bring about an engagement and lead to a marriage. Keeping company which goes on for weeks and months and even years is an occasion of sin—a voluntary occasion; it leads to sin and is often in itself sinful.

Finally, those courtships are foolish which are clandestine and too intimate in their nature. We are all agreed that before people can get married they must know each other; no one wishes to prevent their doing so. But is it necessary that they should meet day by day alone and without witnesses; that they should make expeditions together and remain in each other's society till late into the evening, often even right into the night? Why should they object to being seen by their father, why seek to avoid the neighborhood of their mother? People, between whom there are much more serious issues than the philanderings of a pair of lovers, do not occupy such long hours in discussing them. Oh, you parents, you fathers and mothers! I would like to make your conscience prick you on this point. St. Paul says: "If any man hath not care of his own, and especially those of his house, he hath denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Are your sons and daughters not your own? Are they not of your house? Do you want to deny the Faith and be worse than unbelievers? No; then, have a care for your children. Look well to the doings of your growing sons and daughters; find out where they go, especially on Sunday afternoons and evenings; with whom they go, and how long they stay: "If any man hath not care of his own, and especially those of his house, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an unbeliever."

Let us hear what the parents have to say on this subject.

"Oh," they say, "our son is a good young fellow, and our daughter is a well-conducted girl."

I grant you this may be true, but it is certainly no reason for allowing them to go their own way undisturbed. Good young fellows have been known before now to turn into bad ones, and well-behaved girls to become bold and shameless. Fire and straw burn when they come together. Intercourse of a secret and confidential nature between young people of opposite sexes is a source of sin in thought, in looks, in desires, even when it does not lead to worse things.

But, the parents urge further: "We want our children, especially our daughters, to marry; they must be allowed a certain amount of liberty, or they will remain unmarried." The path of sin is to be left open to children in order that they may marry! Well, even if it were the one and only means of getting married it would be better that they remained unmarried. We are forbidden to do evil that good may come of it.

Finally, the parents say, "It has become quite the custom to leave the young people to themselves while the courtship is going on, and during the engagement." But, I ask you, have you power to dispense yourselves from your serious duty of supervising them? Have your children power to release you from it? No. Why, then, do you consider yourselves relieved of it? You speak of custom; but it is by no means a general custom; and even were it so, it is one that leads to much sin, to many tears, to scandal, to crime. It is a custom sanctioned neither by Scripture nor the Church, and contrary to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, and the advice of any conscientious confessor; it would not be tolerated for

a moment by prudent, God-fearing parents. It can only be described as a great abuse, which ought to be checked, and the more widespread it has become the more resolutely must it be opposed.

On all these points children should help their parents, and parents their children. Young men and young girls must tell their parents openly and straightforwardly what company they are keeping. The engagement will be openly acknowledged, the banns of marriage proclaimed from the pulpit, the wedding celebrated publicly; then why should the first acquaintance be kept so secret, and hidden even from the parents? The parents should give their sons and daughters opportunities for intercourse with their friends in their own homes, not outside; during the day, and not at night-time; in moderation at certain times, not too long at a stretch. Their relations should be such that a pious mother may look on; consistent with virtue, and bringing no blush to the cheek of modesty. No scandal, no loss of good name should be connected with the courtship which is to be a preparation to a really happy marriage. If parents and children combine in this way to do their duty, then we shall have honorable engagements and pure marriages, blessed both by the parents and by the Church, of which one may truly say that they are made not only on earth, but in heaven. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII

On Mixed Marriages

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

Those who intend to enter the married state should be careful, in the first place, not to engage themselves imprudently; the best way to guard against this is to avoid undesirable courtships. We may reckon as undesirable all courtships which begin too hastily, which are kept up too long, or which are secret and clandestine in their nature.

In the second place, those about to marry should be well instructed and should see that there are no impediments to their union.

They should be well instructed. In what are they to be instructed? First, in the truths of their religion, for later on it will be their duty to instruct their children. Next, on the obligations of married life; how should any one dare to undertake the important duties of this holy state without realizing in what they consist? Further, a bride and bridegroom should understand all that is required to found and support a family. The man must be master of some kind of trade or industry or business; the woman must know how to manage a house.

They must see that there are no impediments to their union. An impediment is anything that bars the way to the conclusion of the marriage.

Impediments are of two kinds, those that make the marriage unlawful, and those that in themselves render it null and void. Those impediments which make a marriage unlawful generally merely delay it till the obstacle is removed or ceases itself. To celebrate marriage during the forbidden times, for instance, is unlawful; but when the forbidden time is over then the wedding may take place. The impediments by which a marriage is rendered null and void are much more serious, for where such an impediment exists, the union of the people is no marriage at all.

To-day we will confine our attention to those impediments which make a marriage unlawful; there are many such. For instance, the prohibition of the Church; the forbidding of any particular marriage by the Pope or the bishop; the season of the forbidden times, which dates from the first Sunday in Advent till after the Epiphany, and from Ash Wednesday till after Low Sunday; a vow made by one of the parties never to marry, or a vow of chastity. But the most important impediment which may make a marriage unlawful consists in a difference of religion; when of the two persons who wish to marry one is a Catholic, and the other, though a Christian, does not belong to the Catholic Church.

That the Church forbids mixed marriages, and has always disapproved of them is clearly shown by the testimony of the Fathers of the Church, the decrees of the Church councils—particular, as well as general, councils—by the various papal encyclicals, the regulations of the different bishops, and the attitude of mind of the faithful them-

selves. To offer further proof would be quite superfluous. But, you reply, mixed marriages frequently take place, and are celebrated in the Catholic Church, before a priest, like the most orthodox marriages. It is true, dearly beloved brethren, that such marriages do take place in the Catholic Church, but only when the bishop has given a dispensation. This dispensation can only be obtained when the couple who intend to marry solemnly promise in writing that the children of the marriage of both sexes shall be baptized and brought up as Catholics; that the Catholic wife or husband and the children shall be allowed to profess and practise their religion unopposed; and that the wedding shall take place in a Catholic Church only. When these guarantees are given, then, for grave reasons, the bishop grants a dispensation. But the Church relaxes this rule with tears in her eyes and with a bleeding heart. In the eighteenth century Pope Benedict XIV wrote on the subject of the numerous dispensations for mixed marriages that were asked for: "We affirm, at the foot of the crucifix, that we grant them solely that greater evils may be averted from our holy religion." Where a couple do not give the required promises the dispensation is not granted, and if the marriage takes place outside the Catholic Church it is not recognized by the Church, and the contracting parties commit a grave sin.

You see, dearly beloved brethren, that the Church is opposed to mixed marriages, and I feel sure that when we have considered together the

reasons for her objections you will entirely agree with her ruling.

Let me at once preface my remarks by saying that they do not apply to those mixed marriages which have already taken place with the permission of the Church. I have known mixed marriages where the most perfect union existed between husband and wife, and where the children were brought up in an exemplary manner. It is true that I have also had experience of the opposite. However, we are now concerned only with the Church's reasons for opposing mixed marriages, and for warning the faithful against them. The fact of their being so common is no reason for not trying to deter the unmarried from contracting them. At that rate, if cholera were raging in the town we should take no precautions for the safety of those who were not yet infected.

Why, then, is the Church so completely opposed to mixed marriages? Because a mixed marriage is entirely in opposition to the three-fold good which marriage should contain for each one.

The first good of marriage is the grace of the sacrament. This can only be obtained by the worthy reception of the sacrament. What is the case in a mixed marriage? We need not speak of the Catholic party; but, as regards the non-Catholic party, can he receive a sacrament in which he does not believe, for which he is not prepared, and of which he does not even know? A mixed marriage is, from the very beginning and first conclusion, poor in grace.

The second good, almost the very essence of marriage, is admitted even by non-Christian

peoples to consist in community of all temporal and spiritual goods. The partners of a mixed marriage may share the same house and dwelling, may sit at the same table, may feel the same joys and sorrows, and have community of many things, but they do not share the most important thing of all—religion, faith. If they really love each other they are silent on these subjects; when they are discussed it is painful to the Catholic to answer the questions of the other, or to defend the Faith against attacks. The division between married people in matters of religion makes itself felt in many ways. They are debarred from praying together morning and evening; at table the Catholic partner will feel a difficulty about making the sign of the cross and saying grace; on Fridays the non-Catholic will wish to eat meat, the Catholic will wish to keep the abstinence commanded by the Church. Whose wishes will prevail? On Sundays, if they go to Church at all, one will go in one direction and the other in the other direction; there is no union. When the Catholic wife or husband approaches the sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist it must be done alone, and it will probably not be done often. In a mixed marriage there may be community of temporal goods, but certainly not of spiritual things. Only too often the partners of a mixed marriage are at one principally in their indifference and tepidity in all that concerns religion.

A further good of marriage is children. The first child is born and must be baptized. Is it to be baptized a Catholic or not? We will suppose

that the non-Catholic husband or wife is true to the promise made before marriage and that all the children are to be baptized and brought up as Catholics. Very well; the child is baptized a Catholic, but who is to supervise its religious upbringing? Not both the parents—only the Catholic one. As the child grows up what example of the life of religion is put before it? One parent very probably undoes what the other does. What will the children think and feel; what questions will it ask as little by little it comes to realize that one of its parents—either the father or the mother—never says prayers with him, never goes with him to church, never receives holy communion?

But what happens when the non-Catholic, actuated by family considerations or for business motives, refuses to keep his promise? How terrible for husband and wife to have to dispute over the religion of their children! Such events as births, baptisms, first communions, which should be occasions of joy and happiness, give rise to the deepest sorrow. Who will win in the struggle? For the Catholic parent to give way is to deny the Faith, while to stand firm is to renew the same contention every time a child is born and baptized or sent to school; or are we to say that a compromise should be made, by which the boys will be of their father's religion, while the girls shall follow their mother's? No, for the children are all equally dear to their parents and if the Faith means anything at all to the Catholic father or mother it will be impossible to differentiate between them in this way, consigning some of them

to error, and instructing others in the truth. When the two mothers appeared before Solomon, each claiming a living child as her own, the king commanded it to be cut in half, and a piece to be given to each of them. What happened? The real mother, who loved the child, would not consent to see it slaughtered; but she who was not really the mother expressed herself quite satisfied.

Finally, what do we see when the Catholic father or mother dies before the child has been baptized, before it has been educated? Then the law and such things as guardianships have to be reckoned with; or a second marriage is entered upon, and who knows what may become of promises which, at the time they were made, were doubtless given in all sincerity. Nothing remains of them but a piece of paper, which can not speak, nor act, nor defend itself. "Oh," you say to me, "who is going to look so far ahead!" But one must look as far ahead as is necessary. Before you enter a train you enquire how far it is going and how long it takes to get there. These things are quite possible; they have happened before and may quite well happen again.

The last good of marriage is conjugal fidelity; the very strength of the tie that joins married people, which the hand of God alone has power to undo. The bride and bridegroom of a mixed marriage promise to be faithful to each other till death, and I am quite willing to believe that the promise is given in all sincerity, and is, in most cases, faithfully kept. But the fact remains that the Catholic is more bound than the non-Catholic.

The Catholic religion does not recognize divorce, whereas, by the laws of the State, as well as those of any religious body other than the Catholic Church, not only is divorce allowed, but divorced people may re-marry during the lifetime of their divorced husband or wife. This is very often done. We read in the newspapers every day of couples who have appealed to the law and obtained their divorce. Now, this means that a husband has shaken himself free from his wife during her lifetime, or that a wife has been released from her obligations to her husband who is still living. Therefore, you see that a Catholic who makes a mixed marriage enters into a contract which is entirely binding for him, but from which the other may obtain release.

It can not be denied, therefore, that the Church has many good and irrefutable arguments against mixed marriages. But these arguments and reasons will be of little use, unless the faithful will consent to be guided by them; the efforts of the pastors of the Church will be thrown away if Christians refuse to listen to their admonitions. The young people of marriageable age have the matter in their own hands. They should ask themselves as soon as the thought of marrying any particular person occurs to them: What religion does he or she belong to? If their faith is different from your own, then, young man or young woman, turn your heart and your thoughts in another direction, for they are not for you. You parents, when you notice that your son or your daughter is forming an attachment with some one who is not a Catholic, by all that you

hold sacred, by your own soul, and your eternal salvation, I beg of you to forbid, warn, reprove and pray, do all that in you lies to prevent the mixed marriage taking place. I have spoken because it would be cowardly of me to be silent on this subject. I have said what I have a right and a duty to say; may God grant that my warning may be received and acted upon. Amen.

SERMON XLIX

On the Impediments which Render a Marriage Invalid

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

THOSE who intend to enter the married state must see that there are no impediments to their marriage. There are two kinds of impediments: those which make marriage unlawful, and those which render it null and void.

Among the impediments which make it unlawful to marry, the principal one, and that most deprecated by the Church, is a difference in religious belief, that is to say, when one of the contracting parties is a Catholic, and the other, though a Christian, is not a member of the Catholic Church. We considered last Sunday how a mixed marriage frustrates the full enjoyment of the four-fold good to be derived from Matrimony: (1) the grace of the sacrament, (2) community of life, (3) the salvation of the children, (4) enduring fidelity.

We now come to the impediments which render marriage invalid. They are more numerous and more serious in their effects than those which merely make marriage unlawful, because they invalidate the marriage, making it no marriage at all. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance for the faithful to have some knowledge of what these impediments are. Why do you suppose the

banns of an intended marriage are published on three consecutive Sundays from the pulpit? Is it merely to satisfy the curiosity of church-goers? Certainly not. It is in order that if any impediment to the proposed marriage be known to those present the parish priest may at once be informed of it. It is a duty, and under some circumstances a very strict duty, to reveal it. But this can not be done unless we know what constitutes such an impediment. Therefore, we will make this matter the subject of our instruction to-day, and we will try to form a clear idea especially of those impediments which are most likely to arise.

They may be classified in various ways: St. Bonaventure divides them by saying that to make a marriage the consent of the bride and bridegroom is necessary. For this consent three things are required:

I. Freedom of choice.
II. Freedom to make a choice.
III. Absence of near relationship between the parties.

I

Freedom of choice.—This may be interfered with by error, or by force. For instance, to consent to marry some one in ignorance of who that person really is, to believe you are marrying one person when in reality you are marrying another, is an impediment caused by error. Further, freedom of choice can not be said to exist when consent is extorted by violence, force, and given from fear; this constitutes an impediment of force or terror.

II

Those persons who have already bound themselves to some one else are no longer free to choose. This is the case where a marriage has already been contracted; or when religious vows have been taken.

III

To make a marriage valid it is further necessary that the contracting parties stand in the right relationship to one another. They must not be too nearly connected, nor must they be too far asunder.

(a) They must not be too nearly connected. This brings us to the impediment which most frequently arises and which is the most important of all, namely that of blood-relationship (consanguinity). Who are those who may be said to be related by blood? All those who have a common ancestor or ancestress? At this rate the whole human race may be said to be related, because we are all descended from Adam and Eve. This relationship is such a very distant one that it is no barrier to marriage; but what degree of relationship is actually an impediment? Near relationship, which under the Old Law was reckoned up to the seventh degree, and under the New Law up to the fourth degree, inclusive. What does this mean, and what is meant by the fourth degree? I will explain it to you very shortly. Take a married couple—a father and a mother; their children are related to each other in the first degree; they spring from a common parent. In the next generation their children again are the

grandchildren of this common parent, and are cousins related to each other in the second degree. The children of these grandchildren are great-grandchildren of the common parent and are related in the third degree, while their children again are relations in the fourth degree. All persons, therefore, who have a common ancestor or ancestress four generations removed are related in the fourth degree, and marriage between them is not allowed. They are too closely connected.

Marriage is also forbidden between those who are spiritually related. For instance, god-parents, either in Baptism or in Confirmation, may not marry their god-children, or the parents of their god-children. They are too closely connected.

Finally, to be related by marriage is an impediment. When two people are married or have been married the relatives of each are counted in the same degree of relationship with parties as if they were related to each by blood. For instance, a widow wants to marry the cousin of her late husband; but she can not, for he comes within the forbidden degrees. He was her husband's cousin, related to him in the second degree; therefore he is related to the wife also in the same degree. Relationship by marriage up to the fourth degree inclusive is forbidden; and relationship arising from an immoral connection up to the second degree inclusive is also forbidden.

(b) But it is not only persons who are too closely connected who are forbidden to marry; it is also those between whom there is too wide a separation. These, for instance, whose religious beliefs are too far asunder, as in the case of a Catholic

wanting to marry a Jew, a pagan, or a Mohammedan.

Do not imagine, dearly beloved brethren, that I have enumerated and fully explained all the impediments to marriage; to do so a large volume, and not a short sermon, would be necessary.

You will want to know why the Church has so strictly forbidden marriage between blood-relations and those connected by marriage. The very fact that these things have so long been impediments according to the laws of the Church, and that these laws have been so rigorously upheld, proves that the Church has some very serious reasons for her ruling. A little thought will show us what these reasons are.

(a) The object is the good of human society. If blood-relationship did not constitute an impediment to marriage, intermarriage would be sure to become very frequent, and that would not be for the good of the human race.

The interests of the community are best served when the individuals of different families, races, and people intermarry and so become drawn more closely together; this is likely to happen when intermarriage between relations is forbidden. If relations were allowed to marry one another, then every one would take a wife in his own neighborhood and village, from among his own people.

(b) A further reason lies in the desire to protect and induce morality.

People who are related by blood and connected by marriage see a great deal of each other, sometimes even living in the same house. If there were

any prospect at all of marriage between them there would be grave danger of sin, of adultery, of incest. But the Church bars the way and says: Marriage between you is out of the question; you are related by blood and by marriage. In this way the interests of morality are furthered.

(c) Another reason is solicitude for the physical well-being of the human race. Every agricultural laborer knows that it does not answer always to sow from his own crops, grown on his own land; he renews the seed. Oh, you young people who are thinking of getting married, if you want to leave descendants after you strong in mind and body, do not choose your husband or your wife from within the forbidden degrees! Our ancestors had a saying in connection with this matter which it would be well to take to heart to-day. They said of these marriages that they came to an untimely end, and left no issue. Half the number of lunatics and idiots that fill the asylums are the progeny of these marriages. In ancient history the story of the Egyptian kings, the Ptolemies, is well known and has a special bearing on this subject. They were renowned for great personal beauty; but apart from this, crime, forgery, deceit, incest, and murder were of common occurrence among them. They had intermarried among themselves for centuries.

May all who intend to marry lay these things well to heart, and be obedient to the laws of the Church. If engaged couples are related to each other either by blood or by marriage they should at least acquaint their parish priest of the fact.

A dispensation is not easy to procure in the second degree of kindred, but it is possible; in the third degree it is frequently granted, and in the fourth degree it is quite usual. But nevertheless it is always better to obey the laws of the Church. Amen.

SERMON L

On Confession and Holy Communion as a Preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

"This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (*Eph.* v. 32).

As regards the preliminaries of marriage, those who are thinking of entering the married state should be careful: (1) Not to engage themselves thoughtlessly. (2) To be fully instructed and to make sure there are no impediments in the way of their marriage. We have considered the two kinds of impediments: those that make it unlawful to marry, and those that render the marriage null and void. (3) To live innocently during their engagement. Now it is clear that to be engaged and to be married are not the same thing; and that the rights of marriage belong in no sense to people who are only engaged. If there is anything in the world that draws down the blessing of heaven on a young couple it is a moral and innocent life during the time of their engagement; while immorality of life before marriage, during the engagement, is the death-knell of happiness after marriage.

The fourth point to be borne in mind by those who are going to be married is that they should marry with a pure and holy intention. The married state has been instituted by God, and raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. God instituted it for a definite purpose, namely, the main-

tenance and increase of the human race on earth, and married people are bound to fulfil this divine purpose. They must not forget that everything which aims at frustrating this divine purpose is wrong, and—let us speak plainly—if it be intentional on their part it is grievous sin.

Finally, the fifth point to be remembered by those who intend to marry is to make a good confession and communion before receiving the sacrament of Matrimony. The reason for this lies partly in the present, partly in the past, and partly in the future. We will devote our explanations to-day to these three points, considering them with the help of the Holy Spirit. This will conclude our instructions on marriage.

I

The present affords the strongest possible reasons to an engaged couple for receiving worthily the sacrament of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist. For what are an engaged couple going to do? They are going to be married, and Matrimony is a very great and a very holy sacrament, which one of them, at least, will certainly receive only once in his or her life. It is one of the sacraments of the living and can be received worthily only by those who are children of God, that is to say, those in a state of grace. We prepare ourselves for Confirmation and even for Extreme Unction, when it is possible, by going to confession and communion. Surely, then, before marriage an engaged couple will obey this regulation which the Church so strictly lays down. You must make your confession and communion worthily;

otherwise your entrance upon married life will be marked by a threefold sacrilege. Do you want at the very outset to dry up the well-spring of grace and draw upon yourself the rigor of God's justice? Think how important a step you are taking! The preparations for the wedding are made carefully, a long time in advance. The dowry is provided, the house for the newly-married couple is furnished; all that is necessary for the wedding breakfast is ordered; so is the trousseau, the wedding dress, the bridal wreath, the orange-blossoms; the presence of the witnesses is requisitioned, the wedding guests are invited—many people even make their will ready for signature. When everything else is thought of and provided for, what madness and folly to take no steps to secure the special graces to fit us for the married state!

II

A further reason for making a good confession and communion is to be found in the past. As a rule youth may be said to end at marriage. Now what did you do when, by your first communion, you brought the days of your childhood to a close? You made a general confession of your whole life as a child; you made it willingly, fervently, carefully. Have you ever regretted doing so? Could there be a more suitable occasion for a general confession?

In getting married you receive a great sacrament. You will be closing the season of youth, those days when the influence of parents is not so strong as it was in childhood, and when passions

are stronger, opportunities of sin greater, temptations more violent, and generally the reception of the sacraments an event of less frequent occurrence; in fact, when we are apt to sin more often and more grievously than before. In closing your childhood you made a general confession. It was fitting then—it is fitting now. You did it then zealously and fervently; why not now? You have never regretted what you did, neither will you on your deathbed repent of having made a worthy confession and communion before receiving the sacrament of Matrimony.

III

Another reason for approaching the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist before marriage is to be found in the future. Consider the duties you undertake when you get married; try and take in at a glance their number and difficulty: Life-long fidelity undisturbed by so much as a thought, a look, a desire!—Where is the stability to be found that will make this possible? Mutual sanctification!—what can supply the virtue necessary for this? The education of the children God sends you!—What experience have you acquired for such work? Love and devotion, which will bear day after day with sweetness and gentleness the faults and humors, perhaps even the injuries heaped on you by the partner of your life!—This requires not only virtue, but heroic virtue; do you possess it? The endurance of the unavoidable sufferings and difficulties of the married state!—Have you patience and fortitude enough to bear them? Contrast the difficulties of the task, the

weight of the burden you are undertaking, with the few resources at your command. Will you of your own strength have power to perform all the duties that married life entails? How often have I seen a bride and bridegroom so overcome with emotion that they were almost prevented by tears and sobs from pronouncing the important words which bound them to their fate. Is it to be wondered at? To the question of the disciples: "Who, then, can be saved?" Jesus answered: "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." So may we reply to the question who can be faithful to all the duties of married life. "With men," that is to say, by human strength, "it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Your poor strength will be supplemented by the graces which God will give you in the sacrament of Matrimony. He can make sweet and light the burden that is almost insupportable; He can turn weakness into strength and give wisdom to the inexperienced; He can make constant the inconstant, and change what is bitter into joy and delight.

Prepare yourselves worthily, therefore, for the reception of the great sacrament of Matrimony which you will probably receive but once in your life. Prepare for it by such a general confession as will not need to be repeated even on your death-bed. Prepare for it by a worthy communion which will unite you to Jesus Christ before you are united to each other; then go to the altar and make your contract in the presence of God and His Church. Do not profane your wedding-day, begun in so holy a manner, by any unseemly celebra-

tions; spend it so that the Mother of Jesus Christ, the most pure Virgin Mary, and Jesus Christ Himself may be present with you, as they were at the marriage-feast of Cana, assisting at all you do and say. Then the blessing of God will be with you, and will remain with you; then these words of the Psalmist, which the Church uses in the marriage service, will be realized in you: "Blessed are they that fear the Lord, that walk in His ways."

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house, . . . thy children as olive plants round about thy table." "Thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." . . . "May the Lord bless thee out of Sion and mayest thou see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." . . . "And mayest thou see thy children's children; peace upon Israel." Amen.

SERMON LI

On the Use of Sacramentals

"Every creature . . . is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 *Tim.* iv. 5).

Having considered, one after another, in their order, the seven sacraments, the most powerful and efficacious means of grace placed by God at our disposal, we now pass on to another lesser means of grace, namely, the sacramentals. It is right and fitting that they should come next to the sacraments, which they resemble not only in name but in their effects, and in the administration of which they are invariably employed.

Two points are specially to be considered with regard to the sacramentals:

I. Their nature.
II. Their effects.

I

The catechism asks: "What is a sacramental?" "A sacramental is anything set apart or blessed by the Church to excite good thoughts and to increase devotion, and through these movements of the heart to remit venial sin." The exorcisms, blessings, and consecrations of the Church are sacramentals, also such things as holy water, oil, salt, bread, wine, palms, altars, chalices, etc.; therefore obviously there are two kinds of sacramentals. The first kind consists in the act of consecrating, or blessing, or exorcising; the second

kind consists of a blessed or consecrated thing. When I bless holy water, the very action I am doing, the prayers that I say, in a word, the action of blessing or consecrating is in itself a sacramental; the act of blessing occupies but a few moments, then it is over; this class of sacramentals, therefore, is transient in its nature. But the blessed water can be preserved a long time; therefore, the second class of sacramentals is lasting and permanent in its nature.

We will begin with the first class of sacramentals, which is to be further divided into consecrations and blessings. There are various ways of explaining the difference between these two acts of the Church, but the following is the most usual. When the Church sanctifies any object with the purpose of reserving it for the service of God, or for the pious and religious use of the faithful, it is called a consecration; therefore one speaks of the consecration of a church, of church-bells, altars, chalices, vestments, because all these things are reserved exclusively for the service of God. Such things as rosaries, medals, and many other things, though for the individual use of the faithful, are destined solely to serve pious and religious ends; therefore they, too, are consecrated. But the Church blesses many other things which have not an exclusively religious purpose, in order to call down the blessing of God on the use actually made of them, and to keep all evil influences away. Therefore we speak of the blessing of a house, a field, a well, of the crops and fruits of the earth, of roads and streets and bridges and railways. Briefly, those things which serve a purely religious

purpose are consecrated; those whose object is secular are blessed.

In pointing out the distinction between a blessing and a consecration we have at the same time made it clear where the difference lies between a thing that is blessed or one that is consecrated. Consecrated things are sacramentals, blessed things are not. Let us take three examples! A bishop consecrates a chalice; the act of consecrating it is a sacramental, and the chalice itself when consecrated is a sacramental. Why? Because it is consecrated to the service of God. A priest consecrates a rosary; both the consecration and the consecrated rosary are sacramentals, because the rosary is to serve a purely religious purpose. The same priest blesses a newly-built house. Neither the blessing nor the house is a sacramental, because the house is not meant to serve an exclusively pious or religious end, but is for common use and occupation.

The Church consecrates exclusively to the service of God, or to a religious purpose, nearly everything connected with a Church and with divine service, from the bells in the tower to the altar-stone; each separate part of the vestments worn by the priest; holy water for the use of the faithful, and for baptism; oil for baptisms and the administering of Extreme Unction; the salt employed in consecrating holy water and for baptism; the bread and wine used in celebrating Mass. Palms are consecrated on Palm Sunday in memory of our Saviour's entry into Jerusalem, when palms were strewn before Him; candles are consecrated especially on Candlemas day, the feast of

the Presentation, in memory of our Saviour's presentation in the Temple, when holy Simeon designated the infant Jesus as "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles."

II

Now we will consider the effects of sacramentals, the second point of our instruction. A glance at the sacramentals shows us that they have a certain resemblance to sacraments, and that is the reason of their name. What constitutes this resemblance? As every sacrament must have an outward sign, so do we find in every sacramental something outward: an external object, a sign of the cross, a prayer, similar to the outward sign of a sacrament. Further, just as sacraments impart an inward grace, bestowing and increasing both actual and sanctifying grace in the soul, so the object of the sacramentals is to draw down the visitation of God's grace. But at this point a great difference arises. Sacraments were instituted to give interior and supernatural graces; the sacramentals are often the means of imparting outward and natural blessings, such as preservation from sickness, plague, and death; the curing of bodily and spiritual suffering; protection from dangers and temptations; suspension of God's judgments, in a word the welfare of soul and body. By the sacraments we receive principally interior and supernatural graces; the use of sacramentals gives us external and natural evidences of the divine goodness.

A still greater difference is that the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ, while the sacra-

mentals are part of the ordinance of His Church. In valuing pictures by the old masters it is always a great question whether the picture was painted actually by the hand of the master himself, or by one of his pupils. If it is a genuine old master it is a work of art which can hardly be treasured too highly; but if it is merely the work of a pupil its value is very much less. And yet it is quite possible that once in a while in a moment of inspiration a pupil might equal and even surpass his master; or that the master himself in a fit of carelessness might fall to the level of one of his pupils. But the work of the Almighty Son of God, the author of all grace, must always be of greater value and more efficacious in its results than the means of grace, for which we have to thank the kind and motherly hand of the Church.

The last and greatest difference between sacraments and sacramentals lies in the nature of their effects. A well-constructed cannon rightly loaded and aimed will send forth its contents with the same strength and rapidity and for the same distance, whether it is discharged by a giant of a soldier, or by the weak hand of a little child. Its power lies in the construction of the machine, in the shot, the powder, in fact, in the cannon itself. On the other hand, the archers, who played so great a part in the Middle Ages, were renowned for the skill with which they slung and held the bow, and the firmness and steadiness with which they discharged their arrows against the enemy. A child could do nothing with such a weapon. Now the sacraments contain their virtue in them-

selves; they work by means of the power which God has given them, just as the efficacy of the cannon depends on its mechanism. The sacramentals derive their virtue from the Church, and their effects depend on the devotion of those who make use of them. They are like the bow and arrow, which to hit the mark, requires skill and accuracy of aim on the part of the archer. If the arrow strikes smooth, hard stone it glances aside. It is related that one of the old pagan heroes possessed a sword which could cut not only flesh and bone, but wood and stone and iron. The King demanded to see this wonderful sword; it was brought to him and he tested it but found it no better than any other sword. When the owner heard this he cried out: "I have lent him my sword, but not my arm!" He meant to point out that the virtue of the sword lay not so much in the sword itself as in the arm that wielded it. It is the same with the sacramentals. They derive their power in great part from the devotion of him who blesses or consecrates, as well as from the fervor and merit of those who make use of them.

We must think of this when we make use of sacramentals, and use them with devotion and confidence, remembering the power that lies in the prayer and blessing of the Church. Let us bear in mind what we are doing when we, for instance, make use of holy water; we may consider it as blessed by the apostles themselves, by all the bishops and priests and saints of the whole Church, for such is actually the fact. Sacramentals are blessed and consecrated in the name

of the Church; they are, therefore, real things, and we must use them with reverence and devotion for our spiritual and temporal well-being. Amen.

SERMON LII

On Prayer

"To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul" (*Ps.* xxiv. 1).

THE third part of the catechism deals with grace and the means of grace, that is to say, what we must do to obtain grace. The sacraments take the first place as means of grace, and we have considered them fairly exhaustively one after another in their order. Then we have the sacramentals, of which we spoke last Sunday; though more numerous than the sacraments, they are far inferior to them in their effects.

We have still to consider the last great means of grace, namely, prayer. The sacraments are for particular occasions, conditions, and circumstances; but prayer is for all Christians, of every age and station, at all times and places, under all circumstances; it is the universal means of grace. Therefore, it is desirable to consider it as fully as possible. We will divide our instruction today into the three following points:

I. The nature.
II. The divisions.
III. The necessity of prayer.

I

The catechism tells us what the nature of prayer is: "Prayer is the lifting up of our hearts and minds to God to adore Him, to thank

Him for His benefits, to ask His forgiveness, and to beg of Him all the graces we need, whether for soul or body."

This answer gives rise to fresh difficulties. What is the mind? How can it be raised up? How can it be raised up to God? By finding the answers to these questions we shall obtain a new insight into the nature of prayer.

Prayer is a raising up of the mind. What is the mind? The word is familiar to us, but the meaning it conveys is somewhat vague. What is the mind? Can we say that it is simply the soul? That there is no difference, and that the word "soul" means exactly the same thing as "mind"? No, this is not so; there is a difference, and I will try to explain as well as I can what this difference is. What is wind? Of what does it consist? Of air. Then, is there no difference between wind and air? Yes, there is; wind is air, but it is air in motion. What makes a storm? Air; but air in rapid and violent motion. What is a flood? Water, but water in movement. Now you see what the mind is. It is the soul itself, but the soul in motion. Then, can the soul move? Not certainly in the way material things move; not as a railway train or a cannon-ball moves, or as we ourselves can move our arm or our foot. But the soul can be inclined in various directions —to love and to hate, to hope and to fear, to astonishment and horror, admiration and contempt, pity and desire for revenge, in fact, to a thousand things; to movements that may be good or evil, voluntary or involuntary, violent or moderate, and

which in every-day language we call emotions of the mind.

We are now better able to understand how the mind can be raised up. When we speak of raising up the mind we do not refer to any material action such as we perform when we raise up our hands toward heaven. When we speak—and it is the language of Holy Scripture—of raising our eyes to heaven it is not meant that our bodily eyes are actually lifted to the level of the stars; the eyes of our body remain where they are; it is our glance that is directed upward. In the same way, when our mind is lifted up, it remains where it is; but its operations are directed away from this world toward God. It is in this sense that the Royal Prophet says: "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul!" He has turned away his mind from Mount Sion, from the holy of holies and the temple, from his armies, his enemies, his battles, and victories, from his people and his kingdom, from everything that is in the world, and has centered all its operations on God: "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul!"

Really *lifted up.*—Although God is omnipresent and dwells in the soul, and, as St. Paul says, "in Him we live and move and have our being," yet, because He is the Supreme Being, the highest good, infinitely more perfect and sublime than all created things, the soul and the mind must turn away from earth, and, in order to reach God, mount upward in prayer toward Him. We must look above and ascend higher and higher. King David says in the Psalms: "The floods have lifted up their waves with the noise of many

waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea, wonderful is the Lord on high." Sometimes, like a clear mirror, the ocean reflects the stars; sometimes it is lightly stirred, and ships are rocked on its surface like children in their cradle. But in a storm its agitation is grand and marvelous to behold, and then the waves rise mountains high, as though they were trying to reach the stars to sweep them away in their flood. "Wonderful," indeed, "are the surges of the sea."

But more beautiful are those aspirations of the mind, by which in prayer the soul frees itself from all earthly thoughts and desires, from all anxieties and fears, and concentrates its powers on God, praising and thanking Him, and begging from Him abundance of graces. "Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God, to adore Him, to thank Him for all His benefits, to ask His forgiveness, and to beg of Him all the graces we need, whether for soul or body."

II

This lifting up of the mind to God which constitutes prayer can be done either to praise God, or to thank Him for His benefits, or to implore of Him fresh graces, thus giving rise to the three principal divisions of prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, and petition.

It is right that adoration should take the first place, for it is the mission of all creatures in time and in eternity to praise and glorify God our Lord. When they pray in fulfillment of this mission their prayer is adoration. The angelic choirs and the hosts of the blessed in heaven adore God

unceasingly. Again, all creatures, but especially the whole of the reasonable creation, receive daily and hourly blessings and favors, both in the natural and supernatural order, from the generous hand of God. For this they owe Him thanks, and the rendering of it is the prayer of thanksgiving.

Once more, all men, who are engaged upon this earthly pilgrimage to their blessed and eternal home, require constantly fresh gifts and graces from God. They must ask God for these graces, and when they do this their prayer is the prayer of petition.

Besides these divisions prayer is further divided into mental prayer and vocal prayer. When the mind has been lifted up to God, it can indulge and give vent to its feelings of praise and admiration, joy, thankfulness, and petition without uttering a single word. This is mental prayer or meditation. But when the thoughts of the mind take shape in words, it is vocal prayer. So much for what concerns the different kinds of prayer. It is of much greater importance for us to realize the necessity of prayer, which is the third point of our instruction.

III

The catechism asks: "Is prayer necessary to salvation?" "Prayer is necessary to salvation, and without it no one having the use of reason can be saved"; in other words, this means that whoever can pray, and does not do so, can not be saved. This is a very serious and important truth. Let us see who vouches for it.

First of all, Jesus Christ taught this by His

own example. How did our Saviour spend His childhood and the thirty long years of His hidden life at Nazareth? In prayer. He gave Himself up before everything else to prayer. What did He do before His baptism in the Jordan and at the beginning of His public life? In the solitude of the desert He prayed and fasted for forty long days. How did He act during the three years of His public life? By day He worked, He preached, He healed the sick; His nights were given to solitude and prayer; He spent whole nights in communing with God. He began His passion with His prayer in the garden, He bore His sufferings with a prayer on His lips, and as He gave up His life He prayed. Now, I ask you, why did He pray so much? He had no temptations to overcome; He was incapable of sin; He was not in need of grace, for He possessed in Himself all graces; He was not endeavoring to attain to the knowledge of God, for He lived continuously in the enjoyment of the beatific vision. Why, then? We can find no more convincing reason than this: He prayed in order to show us in the clearest possible manner by His example the necessity for prayer.

Our Saviour's words bear out His acts. How often has He bidden us pray: to pray much, to pray always, telling us that by prayer we can obtain everything. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

And what our Saviour thus taught is fully confirmed by the warnings of the Church, which lays down definitely that prayer is necessary for salvation—that it is so can easily be proved. We

must save our souls, because if we do not eternal damnation is the only alternative. But to attain salvation the grace of God is necessary; this is an article of faith which every Christian must know and believe. Now, in order to obtain God's grace, especially the grace of final perseverance, what have we to do? We must pray. Surely if we want to be saved the least we can do is to pray. Is it too much to expect that the poor man who wants an alms shall at least hold out his hand to receive it?

Finally, in conclusion, let me point to the apostles. They were the immediate pupils of Jesus Christ and, like their Master, they gave themselves up to the practice of prayer: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Like their divine Master they urged the faithful to prayer: "Watch in prayer"—"Be instant in prayer"—"Pray without ceasing." No wonder that the early Christians were lovers of prayer: "And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers."

If we look at the centuries which succeeded the times of Christ and the apostles, we see that those saints whose lives are known, and whose sanctity is recognized by the Church, have been all, without exception, lovers of prayer. As well might we suppose a prayerless heaven, or a prayerless church, as a saint without prayer. Let us look at the other side of the picture, and consider those who little by little lapse from fervor into tepidity, who give themselves to sin, vice, infidelity, and

forgetfulness of God. Are they those who make a practice of prayer? Never. More than this, their conversion dates from their resumption of their habits of prayer, just as the beginning of their downward progress is generally to be traced to their first neglect of prayer. St. Francis of Sales says that the man who prays well is a good Christian, the man who prays badly is a bad Christian, and the man who does not pray is no Christian at all. We must close this meditation by resolving that we will pray in joy and in sorrow, in youth and old age, in sickness and in health, in life and in death; if we do this, then assuredly we shall for all eternity praise God in heaven, singing with the angelic choirs: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and forever shall be, world without end." Amen.

SERMON LIII

On the Fruits and Qualities of Prayer

"Is any of you sad? Let him pray" (*James* v. 13).

APART from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, prayer is the most sublime action of which a man is capable, for by prayer he fulfills the mission for which he came into the world, which is to adore and praise God. By prayer he raises himself above the irrational creation, which does not possess the power of prayer, and approaches the level of the holy and blessed spirits in heaven, whose principal function is to praise and adore God. Prayer is a necessity; it is more necessary for us than the bread we eat or the air we breathe, for these things serve only to nourish the life of the body; prayer is essential to the attainment of the eternal life of the soul.

Prayer, which is so sublime an action, and so essential to our eternal welfare, brings forth the most glorious fruits provided that it possesses certain qualities. It is these fruits and qualities which I want to consider with you to-day under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The principal fruits of prayer are: (1) To unite us to God, and make us heavenly minded; (2) to strengthen us against evil and give us zeal and energy for virtue; (3) to comfort us in our

sorrows and help us in our needs; (4) to obtain for us the grace of perseverance unto death.

(1) Prayer unites us with God, and makes us heavenly-minded. To do this would almost seem superfluous if it is true that God is everywhere, and that we are, therefore, constantly united to Him. St. Paul says: "In Him we live and move and have our being." Such a union as this is enjoyed by irrational things, such as rocks and stones; but by prayer we become united to God with a spiritual and living union, such as unites two people who are on terms of familiar and friendly intercourse with one another. So long as we do not pray, our soul is far away from God, even though God, being everywhere, is near our soul; a closed book can not be read, let it be held ever so close to the eyes; nor can an open book be read with closed eyes; it is necessary that both our eyes and the book be open. Now, God stretches both arms toward us to enfold us in His love; He extends both hands to us, full of the graces and blessings He wants to give us. But it is for us to stretch out the two arms of our soul toward Him: the arm of our understanding by thinking of God, the arm of our will by desiring Him, by imploring and thanking Him. It is our part to hold out both our hands to receive the rich gifts of the Lord; by so doing we become united with God, and enter into sacred and reciprocal relations with Him.

Prayer not only unites us with God; it does more—it makes us heavenly-minded. Constant intercourse with a friend has invariably the result of imbuing us to some extent with his principles,

his ideas, his mode of speech, and his manners. "Show me your friends, and I will tell you what you are." This means that a man's life and character are always to some extent influenced by those with whom he comes most frequently into contact. This influence is felt in a special way by our intercourse with God in prayer. The more frequent, the longer, the more intimate our intercourse with Him in prayer, the less earthly-minded we become, the more we lose our attachment to the things of earth, and become filled with an appreciation of the heavenly and the divine. When Moses, after spending forty days in rigorous fasting and in earnest prayer to God on the mountain, returned to the people, Holy Scripture tells us His countenance was "horned"; that is to say, rays of divine light streamed from it and it bore upon it visible traces of His intercourse with the Almighty. Prayer unites us with God and makes us heavenly-minded.

(2) Prayer strengthens us against evil and gives us zeal and energy for virtue. It strengthens us against evil. No one has more reason to pray than those who are tempted to evil; God—our help in temptation—is always ready to aid in a special manner those who turn to Him in their difficulties. They are specially deserving of His support, for by praying they give evidence of humility; they show that they want to overcome their temptations; and they enlist the help of Him who alone is powerful enough to destroy all the weapons of the evil one. Our Saviour has given us two great remedies against temptation; He has told us to watch and pray. Watch, that

you may be aware of the approaches of temptation; pray, when it has actually come. We shall not be able to find any better remedies than those given us by our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Prayer strengthens us against evil, and gives us zeal and energy for virtue. If we want to walk on the road to eternal life, we must do good works; we must not only undertake them, we must carry them out, and stride forward on the path we have marked out for ourselves. Like a traveler on a long and fatiguing journey, we shall find ourselves gradually growing tired and advancing more slowly; little by little we shall stand still and sit down to rest, and finally fall asleep. We read in the Psalms: "He shall drink of the torrent in the way: therefore, shall he lift up the head." The torrent in the way is prayer; we must drink from it and it will lift up our head; in other words, if we pray we shall feel neither fear, nor fatigue, we shall not lag behind or grow sleepy on the road that leads to eternal life.

(3) Prayer comforts us in our sorrows, and helps us in our need. St. James says: "Is any of you sad, let him pray." Prayer is the best antidote to sadness that we can employ. What do men generally do when they are sad?

(a) Many seek comfort by pouring out their heart to a friend. They describe how long, how grievously, and how much they have suffered, blaming either the Providence of God, or the hard-heartedness of men for not preventing their troubles, or for causing them or adding to them, or for failing to sympathize in them, or perhaps even rejoicing in them. But, what purpose does

this serve? Does it afford any comfort in sorrow? Not in the least. It is too often like rubbing an open wound; it only aggravates the evil.

(b) Others seek consolation from the pity and sympathy of others. But what can that avail? It is very poor comfort, depending on a few words, mere froth on the surface, which disappears in a few moments. But there is real comfort to be found in turning to God in prayer. All our sorrows are known to Him and He can comfort us without words; He can lessen our suffering either by taking it from us, or by giving us strength to bear it; He can increase our patience by the thought of His passion, and of the reward to be gained by patient suffering. "Is any of you sad, let him pray."

We can help ourselves in our needs by prayers. Numerous instances of their being answered are recorded in Holy Scripture and in the lives of the saints, and each one of us knows of many unrecorded instances of answers to prayers. Well, I need only add this—prayer has lost none of its power, nor has Almighty God laid down His omnipotence.

(4) Prayer obtains for us the grace of perseverance unto death. It needs a very special and a very great grace to enable us to persevere to the end, and just as all the stones of an arch are useless without the keystone, so all graces are of no avail unless we have the final one also. Without this grace we can not be saved: "He who perseveres to the end, he will be crowned." The bestowal of this grace is uncertain; it is not bound up with any sacrament. How, then, can we make

sure of obtaining it? If there is any means by which we may make certain of it, it is by praying often and fervently: "Thy kingdom come!" "Holy Mary, pray for us now and in the hour of our death."

II

Note well that these glorious, sweet, and precious fruits of prayer spring only from prayer which is well made. The catechism asks: "How should we pray?" Let this be the answer: We should pray, first, with attention; second, with a sense of our own helplessness and dependence upon God; third, with a great desire for the graces we beg of God; fourth, with trust in God's goodness; fifth, with perseverance. We find every one of these qualities in Our Lord's prayer in the Garden of Olives, by means of which we will explain them.

(a) Our Lord prayed with attention and devotion. He chose for His prayer the quiet hours of the evening, the stillness of the night, the solitude of the Garden of Olives, far removed from the bustle of the town. He left even His disciples in order that He might be quite alone. Although He could have preserved the devotion of His prayer without these means, He wanted to teach us how to put aside all outward sources of distraction. Let us follow His example. Before we begin to pray let us with a powerful effort turn ourselves away from the sorrows and concerns of earth, and think of the presence of God, trying to remember who God is and what we are. Let us ask Him for the grace of devotion. It is a great irreverence

to address God without thinking of what we are saying. If, while we are at prayer, distractions rise up in our mind, we must at once try to suppress them. After our prayer we should thank God for the grace of devotion, and ask Him to forgive any distractions to which we may have given way.

(b) Our Saviour's prayer was humble; He fell on His knees, and threw Himself on His face. Oh, my God, if Thy Son so recognized His helplessness and dependence on Thee, how great should be my humility in prayer: "I will speak to Thee, O Lord, though I am but dust and ashes!"—so spoke Abraham before he began his prayer.

(c) Our Saviour in the Garden of Olives prayed with confidence, as the word "Father," which He used three times, proves. The power of prayer lies in the confidence with which it is made, for it testifies to faith in the power and goodness and fidelity of God. The greater the confidence the more God is honored, and the more surely the prayer is answered.

(d) Our Saviour prayed with resignation to the will of God: "If it be possible, grant that this chalice may pass from Me, but not My will, but Thine, be done." Could resignation be more beautifully or more clearly expressed? If our Saviour prayed in this spirit, would it be fitting that shortsighted men should do otherwise?

(e) Finally, our Saviour's prayer was persevering, for though it lasted several hours He repeated the selfsame prayer in the selfsame words. He granted the prayer of the woman of Canaan,

on account of her constancy and perseverance. Oh, dearly beloved brethren, prayer brings within our reach things that seem unobtainable, and I can give you no better advice than that you should pray unceasingly, and persevere in your prayer even when you see no sign of an answer to it.

To pray well several things are necessary: Devotion such as will suppress all distractions; humility that feels itself unworthy of being heard; unbounded confidence; resignation, which makes us wish whatever God wills, and when and how He wills it; and perseverance that never despairs. Such prayer will bring forth great and glorious fruit: it is a bond uniting us closely with God; a treasure-house of grace; balm to heal our wounded souls; a tower of help in every need; a key which will not fail to unlock for us the door of eternal life. Amen.

SERMON LIV

On the Special Places and Times for Prayer

"We ought always to pray and not to faint" (*Luke* xviii. 1).

We have dealt with prayer from many points of view. We have seen that it is the lifting up of the mind to God; that there is the prayer of praise, of thanksgiving, of petition, and that we can pray mentally as well as vocally. We have considered what should be the qualities of prayer —that it should resemble Our Lord's prayer in the Garden of Olives—as well as the great fruits it brings forth. There still remain one or two points to be thought over, and we will devote ourselves to these to-day, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

I

When should we pray? Christ tells us: "Always to pray and not to faint," and St. Paul's words, "Pray without ceasing," confirm our Saviour's teaching. First, we must note that our Saviour does not mean that we must give ourselves up uninterruptedly to prayer, although He says that we must always pray. He did not Himself pray uninterruptedly; He devoted a great deal of time to preaching the divine words, to instructing His disciples, to working miracles, to holding intercourse with sinners; He slept, ate, and drank; so that if we take Our Lord's words literally we

see in the first place that neither He nor His apostles followed them, and that we ourselves would find it quite impossible to do so, even if we wanted to. The need of sleep would make itself felt; soldiers who have been deprived of sleep for a long time have been known to fall asleep on the march, and even on the battlefield; moreover, food, drink, and recreation have their claims.

In what sense, then, are we to understand Our Lord's words? They may be taken to mean that our soul should be always in readiness for prayer. It is not required of a soldier to carry his naked sword always in his hand, but it is expected that he shall have it always in readiness to draw against the enemy. A Christian may be said to pray always if he is prepared for prayer at any moment; and this could only be the case with those who actually do pray often and well.

Our Saviour's words may be further taken to mean that those pray always whose every thought and action, recreation, work, and suffering are penetrated by the spirit of prayer. We should not want our food to consist entirely of salt, but we do like all that we eat to be seasoned and flavored with it.

The best explanation of Our Lord's words is that those who transform all their actions, everything they do or leave undone, into prayer may be said to pray always. Many of the vessels and ornaments in the Temple of Solomon were of pure gold; but the pillars, the walls, the ceiling, were not made of pure gold, they were only gilded. We should apportion a certain amount of our time to actual prayer, and the rest, which we spend in

eating, drinking, sleeping, and working, we should transform into prayer. How can this be done? By the intention by which we offer to God all our actions, often raising up our thoughts to Him while we are about them. Baldomero, the smith, every time that he raised the hammer to bring it down again on the glowing iron, cried out: "In the name of the Lord."

The catechism asks: "At what particular times should we pray?" "We should pray particularly on Sundays and holy-days, every morning and night, in all dangers, temptations, and afflictions."

Morning and evening, the two points which mark the beginning and the close of each day and night, are particularly fitted for prayer, and seem to invite us to pray. For, who would begin his work without God? Or who would willingly sink into the unconsciousness of sleep, without turning his thoughts to God? Any one who neglects morning and evening prayers, most certainly does not pray during the day either; probably he does not pray at all, and can hardly be said to be leading the life of a Christian.

When we hear the Angelus we should also turn to God in prayer, for this bell is rung to remind us of the greatest, the happiest, the most blessed event which has ever taken place on earth—the Incarnation of the Son of God: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." In memory of this wonderful event the bell in every Catholic church and convent makes itself heard three times every day, from year's end to year's end, appealing to the memory and heart of Christians, and it is only right that they should respond to it.

In order to gain the indulgence it is fitting, and was formerly necessary, to recite the Angelus kneeling while the bell is actually ringing.

We should pray in temptation. When does a soldier grasp his sword? When the enemy draws near, or when he has to attack him in battle. So should we have immediate recourse to prayer, as soon as we realize that temptation has taken hold of us, or that it is approaching.

We should pray in all afflictions and difficulties. Where is there a man who is not afflicted in some way? There are sorrows so great, so piercing, so tragic, that the human heart can hardly bear up against them, and yet to reveal them to any one else is impossible. To whom shall we go in such a case with our difficulties but to God in prayer: "He shall cry to Me and I will hear him; I am with him in tribulation; I will deliver him and will glorify him."

Finally, we should pray in danger, particularly in public dangers and misfortunes, which threaten a whole parish or people or country—fire, floods, hailstorms, epidemics, plague, famine, war. These are God's scourges with which He chastises His people, and which no art, or knowledge, or invention of man has power to wrest from His hand; they have driven many to prayer who otherwise would not have prayed. Need and necessity teach the lesson of prayer.

II

Where, in particular, should we pray? We should pray in particular in the church, for it is God's house, the house of prayer.

God is everywhere, and the whole of nature may be considered as a vast temple whose floor is the earth, whose roof is the dome of heaven; no doubt one may pray in this great temple. But, although God is everywhere, He is present in a special way in particular places. In heaven He gives Himself for the vision and contemplation of His elect; in the Catholic Church the Son of God is present not only with His divinity, but in His adorable humanity. The Church is first and foremost the place appointed for prayer where God will listen to us and grant our requests. "My eyes shall be open and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place; for I have chosen and have sanctified this place that My name may be there forever and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually" (2 *Paral.* vii. 15, 16). What was true of the temple of the Old Law is true also of the Church of the New Law.

Finally, in a church everything conduces to prayer; the devotion of others, the hymns, the kneeling-stools, the pictures, the crucifix, the altar, the real presence of Christ, the remembrance of the prayers that have been offered and will be offered to God in that place; all these things lead us to pray. For this reason it is safe to say that whoever refuses to pray in a church will not be found to pray at home, or in any other place.

It is easy to reply to those who boast that they do not go to church, and who justify themselves by saying that they worship God in nature. This sounds very grand and magnificent, but it is, to put it plainly, a lie, for those who avoid the house of God do not pray to Him in nature. True, they

may wander over mountain and valley, through field and meadow and wood, but they take no rosary with them—more probably a gun; they may sing, but their songs are not hymns of praise —a music-hall tune, most likely; they linger about —not in meditation, but in or outside a drinking-place; in fact, they contribute nothing to the worship of God. In Catholic lands it is the Church which more properly honors God in the temple of nature by processions and pilgrimages; in which numbers of people join and walk preceded by the crucifix, carrying banners and holding their rosaries, praying and singing—but those who pride themselves on their worship of God in nature are generally conspicuous by their absence.

Not only must men worship God as individuals, but families and congregations must appear before Him in their character of families and congregations, and this can be done only in the Church.

III

Our third point is: For whom must we pray? We must pray for all men, living and dead, friends and enemies, and in a special way for our parents, brothers, and sisters, our benefactors, and for our spiritual and temporal superiors.

We must pray for all men—"*Our* Father," "give *us* this day." In prayer alone all men, be they black or white, educated or uneducated, meet as one race, one family, children of the same Father; in every other relation in life they are separated, in competition with, and often in hostility, to each other. We should pray for all; for

pagans, that they may receive Baptism; for heretics and unbelievers, that they may return to the arms of the Church their Mother; for sinners, that they may become converted.

We must pray for the living and for the dead, also; they long for prayers and we owe it to them to pray for them. By prayer we can effect so much for them, and they are worthy to receive our help.

We must pray for our friends and for our enemies. For our enemies, because by doing so we offer proof both to God and to ourselves that we love them and wish them well, and have really forgiven them.

For parents, brothers, sisters, and benefactors. Children are ungrateful who never pray for their parents; brothers and sisters are unloving who never pray for each other; Christians are, indeed, devoid of feeling who never try by prayer to make a return for the benefits bestowed on them.

We should pray for our spiritual and temporal superiors, for these are stormy and dangerous times for those at the helm. When they steer the ship right they secure the well-being of many, but to guide it wrong means destruction and ruin. There are always plenty of hypocritical flatterers who try to gain the ear of those above them; whose hands are tied and hampered in many ways. Let us ask God to enlighten and strengthen them to know and desire the right and to do it fearlessly without regard to men; to love their inferiors and to further their temporal and eternal happiness.

Oh, how much we want for ourselves, for the

Church, the State, the world, for human society! And yet we do not pray for these things; we do not recognize our own wants, although we have power to obtain by prayer all that is necessary for us. Fresh words and modes of speech, new machinery and inventions and discoveries will make the world neither better nor happier. But, if we would only pray, both at home and at church, for ourselves and for others, for our own personal wants, and for those of the Church and of the State, in this way we would be working out our own salvation and furthering the good of the community, of the State, of the Church, and of human society at large. Amen.

SERMON LV

On the Lord's Prayer

"Our Father, who art in heaven" (*Matt.* vi. 9).

We have considered the nature, the different divisions, the fruits, and the qualities of prayer, as well as where, when, and for whom we should pray. We must now endeavor to learn something about the prayers which we use most frequently. The catechism asks: "Which are the prayers most recommended to us?" "The prayers most recommended to us are the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Confiteor, and the acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition."

We will begin with the Our Father, which is, indeed, the best of all prayers. It is the best of all prayers by reason:

I. Of its origin.
II. Of its substance.
III. Of its efficacy.

We will consider these three points briefly, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

I

The Our Father is the best of all prayers, for it was not made by men or even by angels, but by our Saviour Himself, the Son of God, the master and model of all those who pray. It had its origin in the omniscient mind of God. When we

look at pictures we always like to know the name of the artists who painted them; the work of great and celebrated men, especially that of the old masters, is highly prized, and large sums are paid for a specimen of their art, even though it be only a small, damaged, and carelessly painted picture. How high a value, therefore, should we attach to the Lord's Prayer, which emanates from the mind of God, and was first spoken by the lips of the great teacher, Jesus Christ. Our Saviour not only made this prayer, He used it Himself, and taught and recommended it to us: "Thus, therefore, shall you pray: 'Our Father.' " Therefore, considered in its origin, the Our Father is the best of all prayers, for it came from the mind and from the lips of Jesus Christ.

II

As regards its contents, also, the Our Father is the best of all prayers, for it comprises and sets forth in the most beautiful order absolutely everything for which we have need to pray to God. It consists of an invocation and seven very distinct and separate petitions. Let us make use of the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas to help us to form an idea of their sequence and general context. Whoever prays wishes to obtain that for which he prays; that is his purpose in praying. But he also wishes to obtain what is necessary to reach his end. First, we desire the end, next the means to the end. Whoever wants to go to America will not forget to inquire about a ship to take him there. America is his end; the ship is the necessary means to his end. Be careful to

remember this. What is the end for which God has created us and the whole world? His own honor and glory. He Himself says in speaking of man: "I have created him for My glory; I have formed him, and made him." Now, what do we pray for in the first petition of the Our Father? Immediately after the invocation: "Our Father, who art in heaven," we say, "hallowed be Thy name." Here the soul is asking that God's highest purpose—His own glory—may be fulfilled in all things; we are desiring what God desires, and are in agreement and union with the will of God. But, the Creator made His creatures not only for His own glory, in the first place, but for their own highest good—the highest good of the rational creation—in the second place. This second end is reached when we attain to the kingdom of God; therefore, we pray in the second petition, "Thy kingdom come." The first two petitions of the Our Father may, therefore, be described as directed to obtaining that the two great ends of creation, the glory of God and man's highest good, may be realized: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come."

In order to accomplish these two ends, two special means are necessary. To glorify God, and attain our own salvation, we must follow the law of God. Therefore, in the third petition we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But, we poor sinful pilgrims on earth need God's help, both in the natural and the supernatural order, to enable us to follow and be faithful to His law; therefore, in the fourth petition we pray: "Give us this day our daily bread."

But we have to think not only of the end, and of the means to the end; we have also to deal with many great difficulties which rise up in our path and hinder us in the attainment of our end. The three last petitions are directed to overcoming these difficulties. The greatest obstacle lies in the past, and is raised up by the sins we have already committed; we pray that it may be removed when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Another obstacle is with us in the present, in our temptations to sin; we ask for grace not to yield to them when we say, "And lead us not into temptation," which is the sixth petition. The last obstacle consists in evils of both a temporal and an eternal nature, which are the consequences of sin. Our last prayer, therefore, is: "Deliver us from evil."

These seven petitions represent the sum total of all that a human heart is capable of conceiving and desiring; human needs are here set forth in the most beautiful order, and with the greatest brevity; therefore, as St. Bonaventure says, this prayer, on account of its brevity, can be more quickly learned, and more easily remembered, and more often repeated, than any other prayer.

III

Finally, the "Our Father" is the best of all prayers on account of the efficacy, the power it possesses. There must, indeed, be virtue in words so often spoken by the lips of our Saviour, and which have ascended to the Father as the most fragrant incense that has ever mounted up from

earth to heaven. That prayer must indeed be powerful with God which contains no word contrary to His blessed will, which is in absolute harmony with His divine purpose, and which through the centuries is repeated uninterruptedly in all languages, in every Church, by every Christian heart and tongue.

It is for us a most efficacious prayer, for it contains all that lends power to prayer. It is in itself an act of confidence—"Our Father"; of humility—"forgive us our trespasses"; of resignation to the will of God—"Thy will be done"; of love for our enemies—"as we forgive those that trespass against us"; of perfect love of God—"hallowed be Thy name." How could a prayer containing in itself the blossom and fruit of so many virtues fail to be powerful in the sight of Almighty God?

The Lord's Prayer in its origin, its contents, its efficacy, is the best and most excellent of all prayers; once we have realized this, we have to say two things well to heart: First, that we must take trouble to impress its wonderful meaning deep in our hearts and minds; and, further, that on account of its sublime meaning and its efficaciousness we must say it frequently and, above all, with the greatest devotion. The sharpest knife is of no use in the hands of a child; in fact, if used carelessly and thoughtlessly it is dangerous and destructive. Let us, therefore, say the "Our Father" with reverence, with great devotion and confidence, and we shall obtain all the bodily and spiritual goods which it asks from the bounty and mercy of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

SERMON LVI

On the Invocation and the First Two Petitions of the Our Father

"Hallowed be Thy name" (*Matt.* vi. 9).

WE HAVE seen that the "Our Father" is the most excellent of all prayers in its origin, for it emanates from the mind, the lips, and the teaching of Jesus Christ; that it is the most excellent of all prayers in its substance, for it embodies fully, though briefly, in the most perfect order, all that we require to ask of God; that it is the most excellent prayer in its effects, for no other prayer could be discovered or imagined more powerful with Almighty God than that one which our Saviour used before us, which He Himself taught us, and commanded us to use.

It is time that we should consider the different parts of this perfect prayer. We will contemplate to-day the invocation and the two first of the seven petitions of the "Our Father."

The Invocation

The invocation is: "Our Father, who art in heaven." When we write a letter we begin by addressing the person to whom we are writing: "Dear so and so," "Dear brother," "Dearly beloved parents." To strangers we write a little more formally: "Dear Sir" or "Sir." In writing or speaking to any one of rank we are careful to address them in correct style. But how

shall we address God, whose numberless perfections are infinite, and whose greatness no mode of address can express? How has our Saviour taught us to address God? "Our Father!" We are allowed the privilege of calling Him by the beautiful, tender, intimate name of "Father." He wants us to remember what He is; that He is really our Father, who is ready to listen to the lisping words of His children, and who knows what their needs are; that He is a good Father, who rejoices to grant the prayers of His children, and whose power to give exceeds all they can hope or desire. The word "Father" tells us who God is, and it reminds us of what we ourselves are, or have been or should be—children of God. It recalls us to a sense of our dignity as children of God, of our duty to live as children of God, and it inspires us to pray with child-like trust and confidence.

"Our Father."—We do not say "my Father," but "Our Father." That little word *our* denotes our relations with our fellow-men. We are all brothers and sisters, whose highest title is that of children of God, and who in our prayers make intercession for each other: "Our Father." "Who art in heaven."—We do not say these words to remind God, but to remind ourselves, of where God is. It is true that He is everywhere, but He is in heaven in a special sense. He hears our prayers and dispenses His graces from heaven, it is there He reveals His countenance and makes the joy of His elect, and it is there He is best glorified: "Our Father, who art in heaven." An eagle has to make many strokes of its wings before it can reach the clouds, or the highest

mountain peaks, but the soul can by these few words ascend from this vale of tears to the heights of heaven, to the land of the blessed, to the steps of the divine throne. What numbers of blessed spirits kneel humbly before this throne, pouring forth their prayer of praise: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!" Let us also from our lowly place join in their song, with all our heart and soul.

First Petition

"Hallowed be Thy name." This is the first wish of the blessed in heaven, and must be our first wish here below also, for it is the fulfilment of our primary and most important duty, and calls forth the exercise of the highest and most beautiful virtues. This is the simple truth.

God is the Lord, the Creator, the King of the whole universe, and for this reason honor is due to Him from the whole of creation, and honor of a very different kind from that which ordinary subjects owe their sovereign. An earthly king exists for his kingdom and not the kingdom for the king; but in God's kingdom it is otherwise. The world exists for God; He created it for Himself. He says of mankind: "I have created him for My glory; I have formed him and made him." God's primary law requires the rational and irrational creation to glorify Him; this is a necessary law, from which even God Himself, if one may say so, can not dispense man; it is an eternal law which has always existed, a universal law affecting all creatures without exception, and they must obey it, either willingly or unwillingly.

In saying "hallowed be Thy name" we fulfil this primary and essential duty; we praise and glorify God, and desire that He be glorified by all His creatures. "Now, to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." "Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone art most high in the glory of God the Father."

Whoever prays with his whole heart and mind, "hallowed be Thy name," is exercising the highest of all virtues. "There remain these three, faith, hope, and charity," says St. Paul, "but the greatest of these is charity." To wish God good is to love Him. We love God when we desire to see His name glorified; but the words "hallowed be Thy name" contain not only the germs of the love of God, but the germs of perfect love of God. Our love of God is perfect when we love Him not only because He is good to us, but because He is good in Himself. He who begins his prayer by the words, "hallowed be Thy name," is thinking not of His own happiness or wants, neither of his sufferings or his iniquities, nor of himself at all; he is placing God before everything; and, therefore, his first thought is the glory of God: "hallowed be Thy name."

Whoever says this prayer earnestly, putting the glory of God in the first place, will lament his sins and those of all men, and will think with horror of evil, by which God's honor is trampled upon; he will be resolved to further the glory of God, not only with his lips, but by his every action. His prayer will be the fulfilling of his primary duty, the exercise of the greatest virtues, and the most

beautiful way of rousing his good intention: "Hallowed be Thy name."

Second Petition

"Thy kingdom come." By these words we pray for the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is three-fold; there is the kingdom of God within us, which is sanctifying grace; the kingdom of God around us, which is the Holy Catholic Church; the kingdom of God above us, which is heaven. In the second petition of the "Our Father" we pray that this three-fold kingdom of God may come to us and to all men: "Thy kingdom come."

What could be more desirable than that the kingdom of God should be within us, the kingdom of sanctifying grace; for then Jesus Christ is indeed king of our heart, and our soul becomes a mirror of His beauty, a throne of His glory, a temple of the Holy Ghost. No dignity on earth can be compared to such a state; all the treasures of the world are as nothing when weighed against the possession of sanctifying grace.

We all wish to see the kingdom of God around us, namely, the Holy Catholic Church, extending and stretching out to the uttermost bounds of the earth, till it can be said in truth that there is one fold and one shepherd. The great States of the world try to enlarge their boundaries on all sides by force and by strategy, by conquests and colonization; the whole earth seems almost too small for them; but, more to be desired, is the extension of the Church, which would kindle the light of faith in the hearts of men, and cause them to raise their

hopes beyond the things of this world, joining heaven and earth, men and God, and the whole human race together by the strong tie of love.

But, above all things, we want the kingdom of God, which is above us, heaven, to come to each one of us individually. Who is king of this kingdom? And who are its citizens? God, the eternal and all-holy God, and the angels and saints. The law of peace pervades it, and its citizens, united by love, live in a state of immeasurable happiness and blessedness. Oh, blessed and eternal home and country! who would not pray from his heart: "Thy kingdom come!"

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name"; this is our wish for God; but for ourselves we pray: "Thy kingdom come." Amen.

SERMON LVII

On the Petitions of the Our Father

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (*Matt.* vi. 10).

God created the world for a two-fold end: first, for His own honor and glory, and it is for the fulfilment of this end that we pray in the first petition of the Our Father when we say: "Hallowed be Thy name." God created the world, in the second place, for the greater good of His creatures, to make them happy and blessed; for this we pray when we say: "Thy kingdom come," which is the second petition of the Our Father.

We reached this point in our meditation last Sunday. Now, in order that this two-fold purpose of creation may be fulfilled, it is necessary to employ the right means to attain it, and to remove all obstacles in the way of its realization. In the remaining petitions, which we now propose to consider briefly, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we pray that we may be enabled to do these two things.

I

The Third and the Fourth Petitions

To give glory to God and to obtain that His kingdom may come to us it is necessary, before everything else, to do His will. All irrational creatures, without exception, are forced to do it; they have no power to do otherwise. Rational

creatures also must obey God's will, if they want to glorify Him and obtain His kingdom. It is impossible to say, "hallowed be Thy name," without being willing to submit to God's will, or to pray, "Thy kingdom come," unless we are ready to obey the laws of the ruler of this kingdom.

The third petition, therefore, naturally is: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In heaven the will of God is done in the most perfect manner, and we wish and pray that it may be done also on earth, and in the same way as in heaven.

How is the will of God done in heaven? Briefly, we may say that it is done joyfully, promptly, completely.

(a) Joyfully. It is impossible to think that the will of God can be done in heaven otherwise than with joy, for the blessed spirits are glowing with pure and ardent love of God. They are not hired servants or slaves, but children and favorites of the heavenly Father, and it is their glory and delight to obey Him in all things.

(b) Promptly. In the Book of Baruch (iii. 35) it is said of the stars of heaven: "They were called and they said: 'Here we are'; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them." Hardly were they called than they answered. If the constellations responded at once to the call of God out of the abyss of space and nothingness, how much more readily would the heavenly and angelic spirits answer any summons of His! Barely have they recognized the will of God than they cry, "Here we are!" and with the

rapidity of lightning they set themselves to accomplish the divine commands.

(c) Completely. All the inhabitants of heaven, without exception, do the will of God at all times, and in all things, both great and small. No unfaithful servant is to be found amongst them.

We pray that the will of God may be performed in the same way on earth by men:

As joyfully.—Our service of God must not be that of unwilling servants or slaves who grumble in their hearts and complain in words that what is asked of them is above their strength; we must serve God as loving children. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

With the same promptness.—We are all inclined to put off our work in the service of God. As children we say: "When I am older." In youth we think: "I will begin when I am old." Old people put off making a beginning, murmuring: "On my deathbed I will make it all up." Let us begin promptly and at once. The centurion in the Gospel praised the soldiers under his charge: "I say to one, 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another, 'Come,' and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it." As soon as the will of God is known to us we should lose no time in fulfilling it.

With the same completeness as in heaven.—God's will must be done, when it is difficult as well as when it is easy; when we do not like it, as well as when it pleases us. Not only when what we do is observed and noticed by men, but also when it is known only to God. We must obey in the smallest and least detail, just as faithfully as

in those matters which are prescribed under pain of grievous sin: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The natural powers of man will not enable him to do God's will in this manner; for this the help of God is necessary, both naturally and supernaturally. Therefore, we pray in the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread."

By "bread" is to be understood food and drink, nourishment and shelter, in a word, all that ministers to the life of the body. It also includes the grace of God to illumine, and help, and incite us to good works. One of the Evangelists calls it, "our supersubstantial bread"; this means our spiritual bread.

Every word of this petition contains a warning which we should do well to lay to heart.

"Give *us* this day our daily bread"—not only to me who am now asking for it, but to all others —the poor, the thirsty, those who are suffering want. How can any one dare to utter this prayer, and yet close his hand to the poor? Would there have been any meaning in these words if Dives, the rich man of the parable, had spoken them while Lazarus lay at his door starving and wretched?

"Give us this day our *daily* bread"—we are not told to pray for riches or superfluities, but only for our daily bread; that suffices.

"Give us *this day* our daily bread"—do we not require our daily bread every day, to-morrow, and the day after, and all the following days? Certainly we do, just as much as to-day. Then why do we pray only for to-day? Because we must

offer our petition every day anew; daily prayer is clearly enjoined upon us.

II

The Three Last Petitions

We are in this world for a double end; the glory of God, and the attainment of eternal happiness. To realize this double end, two things are necessary: On our part, the fulfilling of the divine will, and, on the part of God Almighty, His support both in the natural and supernatural order.

But let us suppose that we are all walking in the path of the commandments; all engaged in pursuing the road to our eternal home. We shall encounter obstacles that must be overcome. Horses in a steeplechase are all hastening toward the winning-post; they must not only gallop, but they have to clear walls and hedges and ditches. Many a horse and many a rider comes to grief in the attempt; some horses take fright and shy to one side or the other, or they jib and refuse the jump altogether; only a very few finish the course at all.

On the road that leads to our end there is no lack of obstacles and difficulties; they arise from the past, the present, the future. The three last petitions of the Our Father are directed to overcoming them.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us"—our trespasses, in other words our sins, are the first and greatest difficulty which we have built up for ourselves out of the past, forming a sort of wall between ourselves and God. How can it be broken down? We

have power to build it up, but once built up it is beyond our strength to pull it down. The division between hell and Abraham's bosom was not more complete. Abraham said to the rich man: "Between us and you is fixed a great chaos, so that they who would pass from hence to you can not, nor from thence come hither." Neither can we bridge over the chasm caused by our sins; God alone can do this by forgiving us. This is why we offer our fifth petition: "Forgive us our trespasses." If we wish to be heard we must say these words with a contrite heart, and we must ourselves forgive our enemies—and all those who have injured us—their offences against us; for we add immediately, "as we forgive those that trespass against us." Love of our enemies could not be inculcated more strongly, more convincingly: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us." Forgive me as I forgive others. If you do not love your enemies, if you do not forgive them, but try to be revenged on them, then when you say the Our Father, you as good as ask God to hate you, not to forgive you, to take vengeance on you, and treat you in all respects as you treat those who have offended you. Before you repeat the Our Father, ask yourselves if you really love your enemies, because if you do not then you are deliberately calling down God's curse upon yourselves.

The present offers another obstacle to our salvation, in the shape of the temptations that press upon us from every side. If we had to travel on a road infested with robbers and wild animals, and leading through boundless tracts of desert-

land, swept by burning winds, bringing death and destruction in their train, we should consider it a perilous and dangerous undertaking. And yet such is life. The roaring lion of hell is always seeking to devour our souls; robbers dog our footsteps in the shape of dangerous examples, dangerous principles, and allurements; we have to contend against opposing winds, the burning wind of temptations of the flesh, the drying wind of temptations to pride of intellect, the gusty winds of worldliness. All stages and states of life, youth and age, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, life, and even death itself, bring with them their own peculiar temptations. We have, every one, cause to pray, "lead us not into temptation." O Lord, keep temptation far from me, but should Thy providence allow it to come near me enlighten me that I may recognize it; strengthen me to resist it, and stand by me so that by triumphing over it it may become to me an opportunity of practising virtue, of giving proof of my fidelity, and of deserving heaven.

The final danger to our salvation lies in the future in the punishments which our sins have deserved. There are the sufferings we may have to undergo in this life. Who knows what suffering may be before us? There are the dreadful pains of purgatory and the terrible punishments of hell, that final evil which overtakes those who do not succeed in attaining their eternal end: "Deliver us from evil." When we consider the numerous evils with which we are threatened, we have indeed good reason to unite with the Church in making this prayer. From sudden and unpro-

vided death, from the spirit of uncleanness, from thunder and lightning, from earthquakes, from pest and hunger and war, from eternal death, O Lord, deliver us, O Lord, deliver us! The "Our Father" closes with the word "Amen," which Our Lord Himself added to His prayer, and which means "so be it," "so let it be"; we mean what we say, we have given expression to the first and last wish of our heart. Dearly beloved brethren, I hope that every one of you recites the "Our Father" daily! Oh, do so with devotion, with attention, with all the fervor of your heart, and it will serve as a daily reminder of duty, of our daily needs, of the dangers which surround us; then, not only will we pray daily, but our prayer will be daily granted. Amen.

SERMON LVIII

On the Hail Mary

"Hail, full of grace!" (*Luke* i. 28.)

Having considered the different petitions of the "Our Father," one after another, it is right that we should pass on to the contemplation of another prayer which we make use of nearly as often as the Our Father; and which almost invariably follows it.

This prayer is the Angelical Salutation or the Hail Mary. It consists of two quite distinct parts, a prayer of praise and a prayer of petition, both of which we will now examine, with the help of the Holy Ghost, and in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I

The prayer of praise.—The prayer of praise begins with the words from which the prayer takes its name: "Ave Maria," or "Hail Mary." These words were first spoken by the Angel Gabriel when he entered the lowly house of the humble Virgin at Nazareth, to announce to her the incarnation of the Son of God. "Hail," was the first word spoken by this powerful prince of heaven in executing the mission given him by God. If an angel so salutes her, if God Himself sends her greeting in this way, shall we not do the same? If, while still on earth, and before she became the Mother of God, she was so addressed,

shall we deny her claims now that she is Mother of God and queen of heaven. Let us, therefore, repeat what Christians have said for centuries: "Hail Mary"; let us say it with the same devotion, the same attention, the same reverence with which it was pronounced for the first time by the archangel.

The prayer of praise is further made up of the following words of the angel: "Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women." We will consider each separate part of this prayer in detail.

"Full of grace."—This is no exaggerated figure of speech, but merely what one would expect from an angel, the simple truth. Of all graces, the first in God's councils and decrees, though the last to take effect, is the grace of predestination to eternal blessedness and glory. Was such a grace given to Mary? It was, indeed. As the sun was chosen before all the stars to illumine the universe, so was Mary singled out from the rest of mankind to illumine heaven and earth by her holiness and glory.

Sanctifying grace is that grace which adorns and beautifies the soul. Was this grace given to Mary? Who can doubt it? She was "full of grace," in a measure hitherto unknown in any creature, man or angel; grace was bestowed upon her from the first moment of her existence, thus preserving her from original sin. The terrible contradiction and warfare between the spirit and the flesh was not present in Mary as in the rest of mankind. Destined to be the Mother of God, she received as much grace as her soul was capable

of receiving, I might almost say as much as the Son of God had power to give to a creature who was to be His Mother; "Hail Mary, full of grace!"

"The Lord is with thee."—Yes, the Lord is with thee, and not only by virtue of the power by which He is present and works in all things. Not only by virtue of His omniscience; His eye sees all things, even the smallest and most lowly of His creatures, and, no doubt, Mary, the masterpiece of His hands, the crown of creation, was ever present to Him. Neither was He present in her merely in His essence, for so He pervades and permeates the whole universe. No; God is united with Mary in a manner in which He is joined to no other creature; it is the union of a child with its mother. In truth the Lord is with thee, O Mary, in a manner unknown to the rest of His creatures.

"Blessed art thou amongst women."—This means that among all women the highest praise is due to thee. Who are the women whom Holy Scripture praises? First, Eve—Eve before the fall—is exalted as the mother of the whole human race, the mother of the living. Judith is praised for her masculine courage in overcoming the enemy of her people, and killing him. Esther is praised for having won the heart of a great king, and, as queen of a great empire, for saving the life of her people. Mary is blessed and praised for having borne Him who lives eternally, who has opened the gates of heaven for the inhabitants of earth. Eve was the mother of sinners; her children, though living, will die; but Mary has crushed the serpent's head, and as queen of heaven

makes such powerful intercession with the King of the great kingdom that the number of those saved by her means is beyond knowledge: "Blessed art thou among women."

To the prayer of praise of the archangel the words of Elizabeth to Mary are added: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Mary is not to be parted from her divine Son. She was united to Him in His life and suffering; she was with Him at His death; she is nearest to Him in heaven; therefore we praise and exalt her together with Him: "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Her highest and most sublime title is: "Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of the world and the Son of God."

II

The prayer of petition.—Having praised and exalted our Lady in the words of the archangel and of St. Elizabeth, we add the prayer of petition composed by the Church, which is known to us all, and which is made holy by the universal usage of centuries.

This part of the Hail Mary begins with the invocation: "Holy Mary!" The name "Mary" means "Star of the Sea"; Mary is compared to a star, a sweet comparison in the mouth of all men. A star shines in the firmament, while we are below in the night and darkness of earth; the stars are fixed and immovable, while we are in a continuous state of tumult and agitation. How truly this description applies to Mary, who, secure in the radiance of her glory, sheds her light upon the dark places of the earth. Mary is

the star, and this earth and our life is the ocean; we are the mariners. Her clear shining shows us the road of humility, of obedience, of modesty, of suffering—the way to the sure harbor of eternal blessedness.

Then we continue: "Mother of God, pray for us sinners." She, the holy one, is to pray for us sinners; for who needs the help of intercession more than sinners? And who could more fittingly intercede for them than she who is immaculate? The highest title of honor that we can give her is "Mother of God"; this is her real glory, the name she loves most. She will not refuse us her help when we appeal to her by this title, humbly designating ourselves as sinners by our next words: "pray for us sinners."

When should our Lady pray for us? Now, in every need, in every danger, in every temptation, in every sorrow; now, while we are alive, and as long as we live; now, but especially at the hour of our death. That is to say, at that hour when we ourselves are weakest; at that hour when hell makes one last desperate effort; at that hour which will decide our fate for all eternity. Then may she who is holy intercede for sinners; may she who is full of grace pray for those who have lost it; may she who is the Mother of God pray for the children of men; may she who is powerful remember us who are weak, and obtain for us the grace of a happy death. Amen.

We repeat the "Hail Mary" when we say the Angelus and the rosary, devotions which are both approved and recommended by the Church, and which are habitually practised by all pious Chris-

tians. There is no object in inquiring into the value and usefulness of such prayer. Daily prayer is good, a source of grace, a sign of predestination; to pray daily to our Lady is a pledge of eternal salvation. The Church knew well what she was doing when she taught and recommended and accustomed her children to the daily use of the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary." Prayer is a means of grace—"ask, and you shall receive"; it is the most simple, the most universal, and perhaps the most potent of all the means of grace, and one which is constantly within our reach. What form of prayer could we find better than the Lord's Prayer, and that other which invokes and honors His most holy mother?

That famous doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote a great book to refute paganism. The original manuscript, written in his own hand, somewhat illegibly, is still in existence, and contains something very striking. In the margin of almost every page, sometimes even in the middle of a sentence, we find the words "Hail Mary," "Ave Maria." While he pondered and reasoned and wrote the thought of Mary kept flashing through his mind, and every time he saluted her, saying, simply, "Hail Mary!" Dearly beloved brethren, let us salute Mary and invoke her, at rest and at work, in life and in death. He who truly loves her can not be lost eternally. Amen.

SERMON LIX

On the Church Ceremonial, Processions, Pilgrimages, and Confraternities

"For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (*Heb.* xiii. 14).

WE HAVE completed our explanation of the three principal divisions of the catechism, but, before bringing these meditations to a close, I should like to say a few words about the ceremonies, processions, pilgrimages, and confraternities in common use in the Church, as this is a subject that comes within the scope of our catechetical instruction.

I

Ceremonies

By a ceremony we understand certain symbolical and significant forms, ordained by the Church for the worthy celebration of divine worship, and for the edification of the faithful. This definition sets forth, first, the whole nature of a ceremony—that it is an action or series of actions beautiful and emblematic in meaning; second, its origin—that it was ordained by the Church of Christ; and, finally, its object—the worthy celebration of divine service, and the edification of the faithful.

Such ceremonies prescribed by law existed in great numbers in the Old Testament, both for priests and people. Our Saviour Himself, in performing His greatest works and miracles, ob-

served certain recognized ceremonies. In healing the sick He often laid His hand on the sick person and touched him; He placed His fingers in the ears of the deaf and dumb man in order to cure him; at the institution of the Blessed Eucharist He washed the feet of His disciples to indicate to them the purity and humility with which they should approach this great sacrament; in instituting the sacrament of Penance He breathed on the apostles to symbolize the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them; at the Ascension He lifted up His hands in blessing over those whom He was leaving.

The Church, therefore, is following a very time-honored example, and is walking in the footsteps of our Saviour when she surrounds and adorns the celebration of the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, the recurrence of the various feasts of the year, with a number of ceremonies and observances. A beautiful picture requires a frame; indeed, the more beautiful and valuable the picture, the handsomer should be the frame. Some of these ceremonial acts are binding upon those who carry out the services of the Church, such as the lighting of candles, which typify the Saviour, the light of the world; the burning of incense, which signifies the prayer which should rise up in adoration and reverence before the throne of God; the blessing of the Easter-candle, symbolic of Christ's victory over Satan; not to speak of the Easter-fire kindled on Holy Saturday, the lamp which burns perpetually before the Blessed Sacrament, and a hundred other things which are

prescribed and are obligatory in the performance of divine worship.

There are other ceremonies to be observed and used by the faithful themselves; for instance, folding the hands in prayer, expressive of an appeal to God for help; bending the knee in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament; striking the breast to confess that we are contrite and humble sinners, and so forth. Christ Himself tells us in the Gospel that in the temple the publican struck his breast, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

The devout use and attentive observance of these outward ceremonies of devotion is a sign of genuine Catholic Christianity. Moreover, to turn away from these outward trappings of piety and refuse to make use of them, indicates a want of proper fervor and zeal; and when it comes to mocking at the ceremonies of the Church, or joining others in making fun of them, this too often shows not only a weak faith, but gross ignorance and cowardly human respect.

II

Processions

By a procession we means the solemn progress of a number of the faithful, moving ceremoniously forward, either in a church, from one altar to another, or round the church, or in the open air, in definite order and sequence. This religious march is accompanied by prayer and the singing of hymns, and it may or may not be conducted by one or more of the clergy. It is really hardly necessary to describe a procession, we know so

well what it is, and are familiar with those that usually take place on such days as Maundy Thursday and Corpus Christi, as well as on other feasts of the year.

What is the object of these processions? They are carried out with the object of confessing the Catholic faith in face of the whole world, for those who take part in a procession confess the faith openly, not only in words, but in deeds, before heaven and earth, believers and unbelievers. Processions have the further object of honoring God publicly, not only between the four walls of a house, or of a church, but by calling down His blessing and protection in a special way on all the places through which the procession passes. Finally, we have processions in order to celebrate the triumph and victory of Christianity. There was a time when Christians were forced to conceal themselves and celebrate their sacred rites in secret, and the day of freedom first dawned for Christendom when Christians ventured to carry the flag of the cross and of the hosts of Christ publicly through town and village.

III

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages differ from processions in that they may be undertaken by one person alone, whereas the assistance of many is necessary for a procession; nevertheless, pilgrimages are often undertaken by large bodies of men. A wider distinction lies in the fact that pilgrimages are generally made to places at a distance.

The places where the most important events of

our religion have taken place are the most general objects of pilgrimage. Nazareth, where the Son of God became incarnate; Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born; Mount Calvary, where He offered the Sacrifice of the Cross, with the Holy Sepulcher close beside it, from which He rose from the dead; Mount Olivet, from which He ascended into heaven; these will always be places of pilgrimage, for every Christian heart feels a wish to see and to visit these scenes. Other places are resorted to by pilgrims because some sacred object is preserved there and shown to the faithful. Others, again, because they are famous for the wonderful answers to prayer in bodily or spiritual need, obtained by those who frequent them.

Such pilgrimages have always been usual in the Catholic Church. It is no exaggeration to say that our Lady herself made pilgrimages; we know that she went every year to Jerusalem, and, after the ascension of her divine Son, is it not likely that she frequently visited Mount Calvary and the Garden of Olives, probably accompanied by many others? The first Christian empress, St. Helena, made pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and adorned it with beautiful churches. Later on, when the Holy Land fell into the hands of the Turks, hundreds and thousands of pilgrims, kings, nobles, knights, came by land and water, on horseback and on foot, not only to pray, but, sword in hand, to wrest the holy places from the power of the infidel. These were the Crusades, the most justifiable wars that have ever been prosecuted.

It is well known that much controversy has raged round pilgrimages. It is objected that they

cause people to wander and roam abroad, leaving their work at home undone, and neglecting the duties of their State. It is quite true that any one who neglects his duty in order to make pilgrimages is not a genuine pilgrim at all; but this reproach does not apply to all, or even to most pilgrims. If, because of occasional abuses, we were obliged to abolish a thing otherwise good in itself, then the sacraments and even the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass would have to be done away with.

It is urged that people embark on these pilgrimages more with the object of seeing the world than with the intention of giving themselves up to prayer. That may be, but we are not concerned with the purpose and intentions of the pilgrims. It is very possible that many a pilgrim is glad to be free for a short time from household cares, and from the constant little troubles and calls, as well as the labors, of every-day life. But are we bound to infer from this that they have no serious intention of prayer? Two birds can be killed with one stone, and in making the pilgrimage a person may have an honest intention of praying or giving glory to God, as well as of taking a holiday. Look at the numbers of rich people who travel every year to Switzerland, or who patronize watering-places of one kind or another. They say they go for the sake of their health, but in most cases it would be more true to say that pleasure was their aim; but, at least, they must admit they are combining the care of their health with pleasure. Then, why should not the service

of God be combined with some degree of rest and recreation for ourselves?

Pilgrims have sometimes been known to behave very badly on a pilgrimage, and certainly such people had much better have remained at home. Pilgrims should try to give each other mutual edification, and to receive the sacraments frequently, thus making themselves worthy to receive the grace of God. It is unquestionable that year after year many pilgrimages are made in a truly devout spirit, and who can say what strength in suffering, what increase of faith, what purity of life, what resolutions for future conduct, what joy in vocation has been the permanent result and can be traced to their influence upon the souls of Christians?

IV

Confraternities

A confraternity is a union of Catholics for a definite religious end, under rules approved and sanctioned by the Church. Man is essentially social. The State is a society, a necessary society; the family is a society, a natural one; the Church itself is a society, one formed by divine institution. There are numbers of secular societies of all kinds; societies for earning money, for business purposes; societies for singing, for athletics, and many other things besides. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at if the Catholic Church has her societies for the furtherance of religious ends. There are the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Sacred Heart, of the Passion, of the Five Wounds; those of the Rosary, those for

the conversion of sinners, and for a happy death. The name in nearly every case proclaims the special object contemplated. The Church encourages these confraternities and endows them with rich indulgences; for they are a great incitement to prayer, and a bond of good example in the reception of the sacraments.

We will close our instruction by resolving to take part whenever we can in the processions of the Church, to keep faithfully the rules of the confraternities to which we belong, and to make as often as possible that pilgrimage so rich in grace and blessing and exposed to no abuses—I mean the pilgrimage of the Stations of the Cross. Our life here below is a pilgrimage—a pilgrimage to heaven; and when we have reached our destination we shall have found life for all eternity. Amen.

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